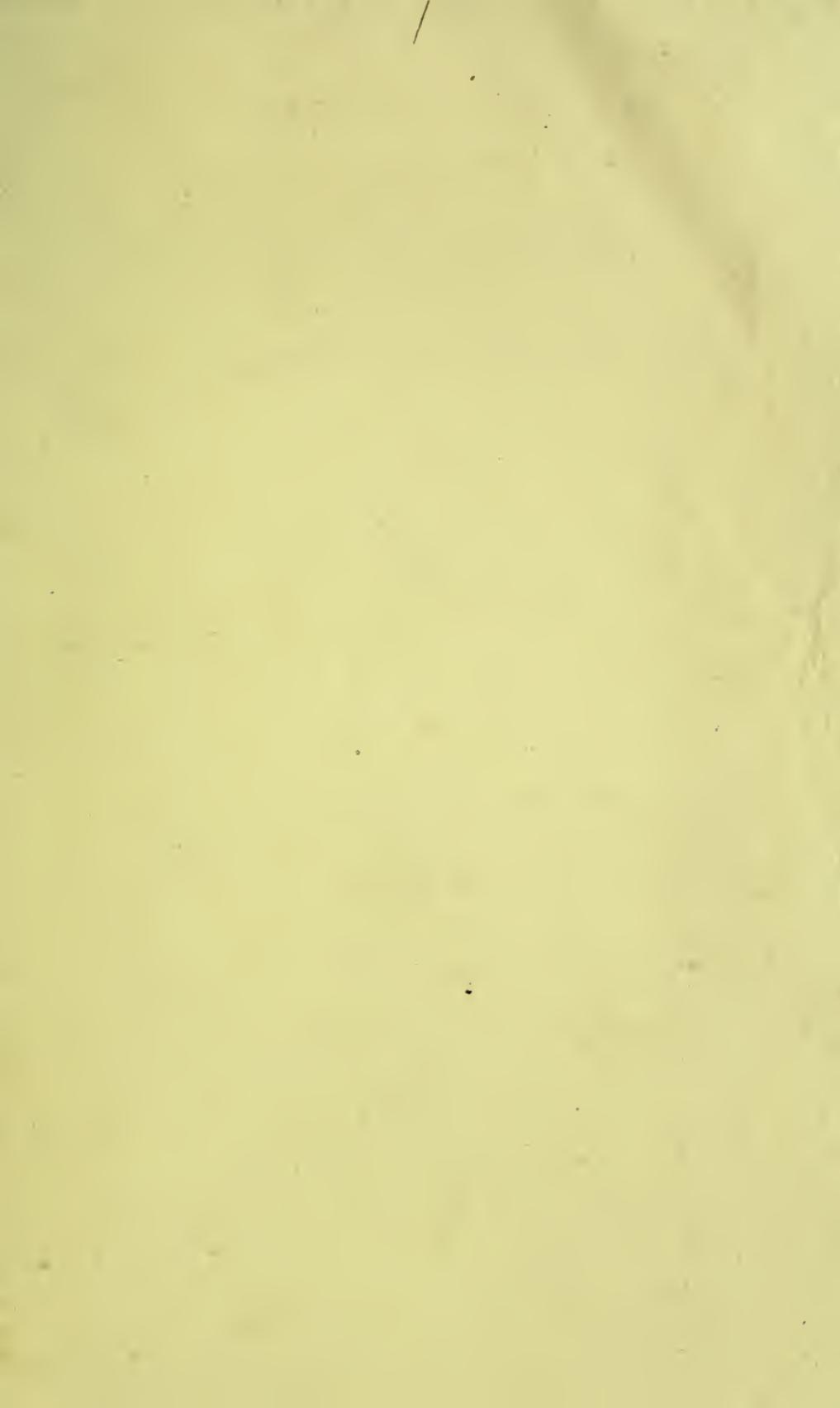


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TOM MARCHMONT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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TOM MARCHMONT.

CHAPTER I.

LEAVE-TAKING.

THE Captain was in the highest health and spirits when he descended to the breakfast-room on the following morning.

The party had been such a complete success that he settled it must be an annual thing. His own joyous mood hindered him from observing Lizzie's wearied look as she entered the room. It was, though, evident to her doatingly anxious father that the last night's gaieties had told upon her more than upon the rest of the party there assembled. It was the blueness under her eyes and the unwonted palor of her cheek that attracted Mr. Lindsay's notice.

“I am afraid you have not slept off your fatigue,” he said as she approached and kissed his forehead; her usual morning salutation. “I shall think the English climate is not doing so much for you as it ought, if you cannot go through a few

quadrilles and country dances without looking fairly done up."

"I am sorry I look such an object," replied Lizzie, trying to get up a joke, for which she was, nevertheless, feeling peculiarly indisposed. "I did not take such an unfavourable view of myself when I was arranging my hair just now at the glass. I could have danced willingly for another hour, and I think that's more, papa, than you can say."

"Bravo ! bravo !" shouted the Captain, as he thumped his fist on the table. "Lizzie is quite right ; the party broke up at least an hour too soon. But we'll manage things differently another year. Date must get a latch-key, and then his wife won't be in such a worry about the maids."

Having settled this little plan as far as he could settle it, the Captain betook himself to helping his guests bountifully to the hot and savoury dish that was before him.

"You have got everything ready, I suppose," said Mr. Lindsay to Lizzie, as the latter handed to her father the large plateful of fish that had been intended for her own consumption. "Remember, the coach starts at ten."

"But you are not going to-day?" said the Captain, looking up quite startled. "Why I never thought of your leaving us so soon."

"Did you not?" said Mr. Lindsay in a tone of surprise, as he cast a glance at his hostess. "I thought it had been quite an understood thing."

The fact was that Mrs. Bamford had carefully refrained from hinting to her husband at the communication made her by Mr. Lindsay with regard to his plans. Had they been revealed to him a little sooner, it is probable that his earnest persuasions might have wrought a change in them; but Rebecca was already feeling quite done up with the confusion and excitement which the presence of guests invariably occasion in a household where they are but rarely seen, and so she was extremely anxious for the departure of the present company.

“An understood thing!” exclaimed the Captain in reply to Mr. Lindsay’s observation; “it was nothing of the sort. I can assure you I never heard a word about it till this minute. You positively can’t go to-day. Why, I’m expecting young Tom Marchmont this morning. I asked him to come in expressly that he might see a little more of his old playfellow there.—He’ll be quite disappointed if he finds her gone.”

There was no paleness of Lizzie’s cheek just now; however, the rest of the company were so intent on the broiled fish to which the old sailor had been so liberally helping them, that they did not notice the painful confusion which his words had occasioned our heroine. If they confused Lizzie, they to an equal extent perplexed her father. He was most unwilling to disoblige his hospitable host, and yet he was observant enough to perceive that his hostess was not at all anxious that he and his daughter should comply

with the wishes of the former. Besides, he did not wish Jacob to have his walk to Beauchamp Cottage for nothing, and he was anxious also to receive the intelligence which the young lawyer had promised to bring him.

“ I could not well stay longer,” was, in consequence, his reply to the Captain’s pressing entreaties. “ The fact is I am expecting a visit from Birch this afternoon, and I should be sorry to be out when he calls.”

“ A visit from Birch !” exclaimed the Captain. Why you can see him fifty times in the course of the year, I’ll be bound, and that without making a journey expressly for the purpose. You’d better stop now you are here. I’ll answer for it Lizzie would rather see Tom than Jacob any day. Why, they were like brother and sister in former years, were Lizzie and Tom !”

“ Oh !” said Lizzie colouring deeper and deeper, “ papa has quite arranged to go to-day, though we should both, I am sure, have liked to have staid longer, if we could.”

“ Well,” said the Captain, now beginning himself to suspect that there was something between Lizzie and his wife’s nephew, “ you’ve a right to give the preference to Jacob, if you please, so we’ll say nothing more about it ; only another time when you favour me with a visit, you must let me know your plans a little sooner.”

Lizzie found a difficulty in restraining herself from shedding tears of vexation, while Mr. Lindsay wished inwardly

that his hostess would have the candour to speak up and explain matters to her husband. He could do nothing himself but murmur apologies, which were accepted ungraciously. The Captain felt himself constrained to hurry rather unpleasantly over his morning's repast, in consequence of the unexpected intelligence he had received, and altogether he felt himself to be considerably aggrieved. At a little before ten the coach appeared, and Lizzie found herself hardly prepared for its arrival, so much had she been detained by her hostess's earnest, but ineffectual entreaties that she should take an inside place.

"Remember you are not to treat me so shabbily when next you come," said the Captain as he took leave of them.

Mr. Lindsay in reply warmly expressed his thanks for his entertainer's recent kindness. Lizzie was not behindhand with her father in her assurances of gratitude, which were given with so pretty a look and manner accompanying them, that they won from the old sailor a resounding kiss. Mrs. Bamford was a good deal scandalized thereat, and it was with much satisfaction that she beheld her two visitors mounted on the coach, and driving rapidly away.

Mrs. Bamford's comfortable frame of mind was not participated in by one, at all events, of her two recent guests. Poor Lizzie was feeling positively miserable. That last observation of the Captain's respecting her supposed preference for Jacob, had destroyed her equanimity altogether, and made

her hate the idea of returning home for the avowed intention, as expressed by her father, of being at home to receive the man whom she so thoroughly disliked. Almost was she inclined to wish that her conscience had been less scrupulous ; that she had followed the impulse of her heart by responding to that tacit declaration of her lover's sentiments. But no——wishes such as these were sinful, so Lizzie believed, for by thus signifying her acceptance of the heart that had been already given to another she would, she felt, have been guilty of one of the cruelest of thefts. She resolved on stifling these promptings of selfishness, but the effort was too hard for her as yet. That devotion of manner—that something so easy to be understood, so difficult to be explained, by means of which the lover at once makes known his preference to the object of it—try as she would, our heroine could not at once forget all this, while her own rejection of our hero's proffered love filled the mind of the anxious girl with regret rather than with satisfaction.

As Lizzie was thus sadly musing her father at last broke the silence.

“Sir Thomas seems a gentlemanly sort of fellow,” he observed, “though not, I should say, a man of many words. I am glad to find he is not so great an object of pity as I had been led to suppose he was.”

A slight flush came across Lizzie's cheek as her father glanced archly at her.

"And so am I, papa," was the reply. "Sir Thomas's circumstances seem as prosperous as his warmest friends could wish."

Here the conversation between father and daughter ended. The coach had stopped to take up another passenger, an acquaintance of Mr. Lindsay's, to whom the latter addressed himself, while Lizzie was left to pursue, uninterruptedly, the current of her own troubled thoughts.

The Captain was in the meanwhile feeling disappointed at the non-arrival of his expected guest, our hero having decided that he could not face Lizzie again. Though he exonerated the old sailor and our heroine too from all participation in the rebuff that had been given him on the previous day, yet he was convinced nevertheless that it had been a preconcerted scheme. Miss Birch and her sister would naturally wish to keep a strict guard round their nephew's betrothed, and it was evident, he thought, that they had discovered his own feelings towards her, and that they imagined he might prove a dangerous rival to Jacob. He could have faced anything, even Miss Birch's scrutinising glances, could he have buoyed himself up with the smallest hope of really becoming such, but with him all hope had now vanished. Lizzie had rejected his advances, and he decided, in consequence, that the less he saw of her the better.

It was with some show of cheerfulness that he entered the breakfast-room on the morning of his own, as well as of

Lizzie's departure, in spite of the vexation that was gnawing at his heart.

His forced cheerfulness was met more than half-way. The evening's entertainment, so unexpected as it was, had infused into his host and hostess an extraordinary amount of gaiety. Though the rector had discovered that it was not etiquette to banter a man about the girl to whom he was really engaged, yet he thought there could be no harm in getting up a little fun through the instrumentality of another, to whom he was in no way bound. For the third time Tom had been detected by the worthy man dancing with Lucy Smith, and so there were various sly hints thrown out with regard to that young lady's powers of captivation. Our hero took the rector's harmless jokes with much seeming complacency, and commented in turn on Miss Birch's predilection for his host. There must, he thought, have been some passages in their lives unknown to Mrs. Date, which innuendo caused the latter to chuckle heartily. She had never had occasion to be jealous of her husband in his relations with the other sex—least of all as they regarded Miss Birch. However she, too, on this particular morning was inclined to be a little jocose, so she supported Tom in his argument with all the skill that a very inartistic actress was able to afford.

Breakfast was over, and Mrs. Date had left the room on household cares intent, and now the rector being alone with his guest.

“I think,” the former observed, “I heard you make some arrangements with the Captain about calling there this morning. If so, I shall be very happy to accompany you, as I should wish to pay my respects to Mr. Lindsay before he takes his departure.”

“Oh!” said Tom, somewhat impatiently, “I had my leave-taking last night, and I don’t care to do the thing over again. I was going to ask you,” he added in a more amiable tone, “if you would let me hear the rest of your pamphlet. I don’t think we had got beyond the middle of it.”

“By all means,” replied Mr. Date, delighted at the proposal, “I shall have the greatest pleasure in gratifying your desire. Mrs. Date will no doubt be wishing to call on Miss Lindsay, and we can go there together in the afternoon.”

“Why, don’t you know the Lindsays were to leave at ten o’clock this morning?” put in Mrs. Date, who had re-entered the room just in time to hear her husband make his little arrangement. “Mrs. Bamford told me positively they meant to leave this morning.”

“And the Captain most positively informed me,” was the rejoinder, “that he intended keeping them till the end of the week. But come along, Tom, we’ve not much time, and I should like you to go with me through the whole of my argument;” and our hero with great willingness on this occasion, followed his host into the study.

While the rector was occupied in enunciating clearly, and

with emphasis, the doctrines contained in his pamphlet, the Captain found himself less pleasantly employed. The departure of friends always leaves with it a certain blank, and, in addition to this, the old sailor had deprived himself of his morning's constitutional for the express purpose of being at home to welcome Tom. Impatiently did he stride up and down the garden walk until his watch, which he had been continually referring to, told him the hour of his expected visitors' departure was drawing near. He decided therefore on waiting for him no longer, but, shutting his garden gate behind him, he took the road that led past the rectory, intending to find out if he could, what it was that had induced his young friend to break his engagement with him. Had the sociable, but thoughtless Lucy been beguiling him into spending his morning at Rosebank, instead of honourably fulfilling a previous engagement? If such were the case, the old sailor considered that his breach of faith offered a fair subject for a joke, and he went prepared to fulminate on the offender some of his most pungent ones, whether the latter were disposed to take them pleasantly or not.

It was with no small feeling of discomfiture that the rector, as he raised his eyes from his pamphlet, beheld the old sailor's burly form occupying the doorway of his study.

“Good morning, Captain,” he said, in as affable tone as a certain feeling of peevishness would allow of his assuming.

“Here are Tom and I deep in doctrinal matters, and our time won’t allow of any interruption. Take a seat, will you, and you can have your chat with our young friend as soon as I’ve got through these few pages.”

It seemed to the new arrival, as the rector turned them over, as if the remaining pages were not few, but many, and he briefly decided on not accepting the chance thus offered him of benefiting by their recital.

“Thank ye, thank ye, but I’m just bound for my morning’s walk,” was in consequence his reply. I merely called to see what had become of Tom, for I have been stopping in for him a full hour and more.”

“I am very sorry —” stammered our hero.

“Oh ! I forgive you,” replied the Captain, who was now firmly persuaded that his young friend had been detained, an unwilling captive, and that he was to be pitied rather than blamed. “Besides,” he then added by way of consolation, “you would not have seen Lizzie after all, for she has been playing us both false. I told her she ought really to stop and see her old playfellow again, but she would insist on giving the preference to Jacob, who it seems is to be awaiting them on their return. Between ourselves,” he continued, winking his eye and looking very knowing, “I believe the thing’s as good as settled between those two, and I felt that if that were the case, there was nothing more to be said.”

These words conveyed to our hero's mind the impression that this stupid, meddling old fellow, as he internally designated the Captain, had been actually endeavouring to stand his champion, and to persuade the ill fated Lizzie to look favourably on himself:—His irritation was consequently extreme, though he gave no vent to it in words. However his expression was enough to convince the old sailor that his discourse was not approved of, indeed it brought the latter to the conclusion that Tom was strangely altered for the worse—that he had a temper which he, the Captain, would not care to meddle with, and that the less he saw of his company for the future, the better he would be pleased. Taking up, therefore, his hat and stick, he was about wishing our hero good morning, without going through the ceremony of shaking hands, when a kindly impulse pushed the latter forward, and led him into constraining the old man to accept his own. Tom felt that he had, by his ungracious manner, wounded the feelings of an old friend, and now he was eager to make reparation. The hand thus offered was cordially taken, and in spite of petty annoyances, the old and young man parted on the best of terms.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN we last took leave of our heroine she was, as we know, in the thick of anxious and uneasy musings while seated by her father's side on the top of the Fairford coach. She had been thinking as she approached her home, how much she should dislike this visit of Jacob's, and as the spire of the church came into view, and then Mrs. Birch's comfortable little mansion, the sight of each seemed to have the effect of arousing more vehemently her distaste for the approaching interview, and she at length resolved that the lawyer's visit should be paid to her father only.

"Papa," she said as, after alighting from the coach, they walked together towards their own little home, "Papa, you won't mind my leaving you as soon as we have had our

dinner. It is a long time since I have seen Mary Bridges, and I think it will be so much better for you to be alone when Mr. Birch comes."

"I shall *very much* mind your going away, Lizzie," was the reply. "It seems to me it would be like an intentional slight that you were wishing to put upon my young friend. You know he says particularly in his letter that he hopes to see us both." "But papa," said Lizzie in a tone of eager pleading, "he says he is coming merely to have a talk with you over West Indian affairs, and it will, I am sure, be much better that I should not be in the way, so you must not, dear papa, be annoyed at my leaving you," and Lizzie put her arm in her father's, and leant upon him caressingly, as she looked for an expression of approval in his face.

She sought for it in vain.

"Lizzie," he replied with a more serious and a severer look and tone than he had ever before assumed towards her, "Lizzie, there is one fault in your character which I much regret to have to notice. You are, my love, wanting in gratitude; and you indulge, besides, in unreasonable partialities and dislikes. I must tell you candidly that of those two young men who were your acquaintances in childhood I decidedly give the preference to Mr. Birch, and it seems to me that, having adopted some silly prejudice against him, you are so foolish as to think you must keep up the recollection of it now."

Here Mr. Lindsay came to a full stop. The tears were streaming from Lizzie's eyes, bedewing her cheeks and rendering her whole countenance piteous to behold. The poor man felt at once that he had been too hard upon his daughter, and now he was all eagerness to make amends.

"I am very sorry, my dear, to have so distressed you," he said in a soothing tone. "Believe me it has been more for your own welfare than for mine that I have cherished the hope of your responding in time to an honest attachment. If you find this beyond your power, if you cannot learn to appreciate the worth and the generosity of my young friend's character, I am far from wishing to force your affections, but I do wish you to recognize the fact that I look upon Birch as the most tried and the most constant friend that I possess, and that as such it is your duty as my daughter, to show him at all events civility. Your running away the moment we have finished our meal, perhaps just as his knock is heard, would be so very marked a proceeding that I cannot give any countenance to it."

Nothing more was said. Lizzie obediently sate on, the dinner being ended, and soon the young lawyer was announced. As he shook hands with our heroine he detected on her countenance an expression of unhappiness, and it wore besides the traces of tears. He was convinced thereby that at present there was nothing between her and Tom, and so far he was satisfied, though he would have been considerably more

pleased had Lizzie's features lighted up with joy at his approach, instead of betraying, as they did, trouble and disappointment.

"You have had a pleasant visit, I hope," was his first observation.

Our heroine took so long to reply, that her father thought it advisable to answer for her.

"Had we found it otherwise," he remarked with emphasis, "we should have been hard indeed to please. Kindness, and hospitality, and fine weather combined can hardly fail of making one's stay in a friend's house agreeable. We met, besides, many old acquaintances of my daughters—one too whom we did not at all expect to see. Sir Thomas Marchmont was staying at the rectory during the time of our visit."

Jacob looked scrutinisingly into Lizzie's face.

"She loves him," was the thought which the contemplation of it awakened, whilst it was thus that he responded to Mr. Lindsay's last piece of information.

"Did you meet Sir Thomas Marchmont! Let me see.—It must be four years at least since I last saw him. It was indeed only recently that I was made aware of the fact of his being the same Tom Marchmont who was formerly a school-fellow of mine. He is, I am told, just going to be married."

"So we were given to understand," was the reply, and now the conversation turned on other topics.

When Jacob rose to depart he declared his sentiments towards Lizzie as plainly but as silently as Tom had done on the previous evening, and Lizzie as plainly told him by her manner that his hopes were vain.

She has too recently seen that old friend of hers, thought Jacob, as he walked back towards the village. I must give her a little time to get over the effects of the interview. If he should, though, take it into his head to call in meanwhile, it will be a deuced bore ; and the lawyer puzzled himself to consider what means he could adopt for the hindrance of so inopportune a visit.

CHAPTER III.

A RECONCILIATION.

OUR hero returned to Maplewood in a very unsettled state of mind. For the second time had come over him that sense of weariness which we are most of us doomed to experience at some period of our career—a weariness which, for the time being, seemed to render him indifferent to everything around him. Mr. Maxwell was, however, so entirely engrossed with a plan for some farm-buildings which had just been sent him, that he hardly noticed his young friend's abstraction. Soon Harry's ring was heard, and Tom considered it necessary that he should get up a show of pleasure at seeing him, though at present the recollections which his appearance served to revive were peculiarly unpleasant to our hero.

If ever Harry felt completely restrained it was in Mr. Maxwell's presence; and now, after discussing the weather, and the news of the day, he found he had little else to

descant upon. He was, besides, so full of the subject which had occasioned his visit, that he was all impatience to clear his breast of it, though he thought it might prove awkward were he to touch upon it in Mr. Maxwell's presence.

"Are you inclined for a walk?" he said at last, addressing himself to Tom. "I want to call on Seymour, and perhaps you won't object to accompanying me so far."

"I shall be most happy to do so," was the reply, for our hero was getting very tired of sitting still, and now the two young men rose simultaneously.

On Harry's rising to depart Mr. Maxwell asked him if he would like to return and dine, but the idea of having to pass so many hours in the company of so erudite and searching a man as his cousin was too much for the young sportsman. Finding, therefore, a flimsy apology in the assertion that his mother would be expecting him back, he took a courteous leave of his relative and with Tom for his companion, he turned his steps in the direction of the parsonage.

They had not gone very far before he commenced the subject he had on hand.

"They were all very sorry at Greyfield," he burst forth, "that you should have gone off that time in such a hurry."

"There was nothing else for me to do," replied our hero with an air of determined dignity.

"Well, upon my soul! I think you were too hard upon that girl," was Harry's retort.

“Hard upon her? What do you mean?” said Tom, stopping abruptly and facing his companion.

“Why, I mean that when a young lady engages herself, she naturally expects her lover to show her some little attention, and that she is piqued and angry if he does not.”

“And do you mean by all this to insinuate that I showed Em— Miss Emily Marchmont no attention?”

“I do indeed,” was Harry’s blunt answer, “and I know, besides, how dreadfully annoyed she felt, and how miserable she has been made through you.”

“You must excuse me for contradicting you,” said Tom haughtily. “It had quite ceased to be in my power to render my cousin unhappy or the reverse. Had she not taken pains to make me aware of the fact, I would never have consented to absolve myself and her from what I cannot now but look upon as an unfortunate engagement.”

“Ah!” said Harry, “when a fellow wants to absolve himself from an engagement he’s sure to find plenty of good reasons for doing so, though they mayn’t convince anyone but himself.”

“What do you mean, sir?” said Tom, looking as if he were very much disposed to challenge his companion a second time.

“Why, I mean that poor Emily acted foolishly out of pique, and that you took advantage of her folly, and made it the means of escaping from your engagement.”

“It is all false!” was the hot rejoinder. “Had you informed me that Miss Marchmont had entered into a fresh engagement, I should not have been surprised, but if you accuse me of giving her up to please myself rather than her, you accuse me of conduct that I am incapable of, and for which I must now demand an apology;” and Tom again faced his companion with a stern and resolute air.

“*Bring about a reconciliation, if possible!*” had been Lady Marchmont’s last words to Harry, and now it struck the latter that he might not be going exactly the right way to work. He had wit enough, therefore, to change his tactics by throwing the blame entirely upon Emily.

“Well, to be straightforward,” he observed, “it must be admitted that Emily behaved like a fool, and she is paying dearly for having done so. She got up a quarrel in the hope, I believe, of bringing you again to her feet; but her hope has been disappointed, and now she goes about the house looking so miserable, that it makes a man uncomfortable to see her.”

Tom felt a little staggered at this information. However he said nothing, and the two walked on in silence till they arrived at the gate leading up to the parsonage, when our hero put out his hand to take leave of his companion.

“You’ll let me tell Emily, won’t you,” said Harry pleadingly, “that you want to see her again. I am sure she is dying to get a note, or a message, or something or other.”

Tom knew not what to say. Were it not that his heart

had in a way been so recently offered to Lizzie, it is probable that he would have consented at once to the proffered reconciliation. As it was he wavered, and looked quite as miserable as Harry had just been depicting Emily as looking.

"I shall expect soon to see you over there," persisted Harry. "I know you won't be able to keep away much longer."

Our hero wished Harry good-bye without actually disowning his assertion; and as he retraced his steps he felt himself to be anything but a happy man. If Emily did indeed care for him, he believed he could not honourably cast her off; and yet that devotion he had once experienced for her was gone. He had, too, lost his confidence in her, and he felt that he could not easily recover it. He determined on confiding his troubles, as far as they concerned Emily, to his old friend. Those which Lizzie had occasioned him would, as he believed, never now be known to anyone save himself.

On re-entering the Hall our hero found Mr. Maxwell in the act of putting on his great coat and immediately he proposed accompanying him in his walk. The proposal was graciously acceded to, and Harry himself had not shown greater eagerness to unburthen himself of what he had to say than did Tom, when on the present occasion he found himself in the avenue with his old friend by his side.

Mr. Maxwell's countenance expressed anything rather than sympathy with the foolish penitent, neither did his words help to confirm Tom in his notions of honour concerning her.

"If you can believe," he said, "on the assertion of my hare-brained cousin that Miss Emily Marchmont has any feeling connected with yourself beyond the gratification of her own self-interest, you are of a more gullible nature than I could have supposed possible."

A blush passed across the widower's cheek as in a harsh voice he uttered these words, for he remembered that once upon a time he had shown himself to be quite as gullible as his young friend seemed disposed to prove himself just now.

Tom felt by no means eager to gratify his sense of honour on the present occasion. He did not try therefore to argue the point with his caustic counsellor, and in time the conversation turned on other topics.

"I am expecting the Annesleys to dine here to-morrow," Mr. Maxwell at last observed. "I am glad you will be at home to meet them."

He gave a sidelong glance at Tom as he spoke, which raised an expectation in the mind of the latter that his friend was going to announce to him his engagement with the most charming girl in all the country round ; however, no such announcement came. With two objects of possible

attachemnt on hand, our hero's brain had not space enough to contain the notion of a third, even had Mr. Maxwell's hints been plainer than they were.

A few minutes after the arrival of the post on the following morning, old Rogers again appeared with another note which he presented to the young Baronet. It was in Lady Marchmont's hand-writing, and her coachman had been the bearer of it. The contents went far to prove how great was her eagerness to achieve a reconciliation.

She had, she said, just had an interview with Mr. Harewood who had given her to understand that Tom regretted as much as they did the angry words which had terminated his visit so abruptly. She would not, therefore, delay a moment writing to say how welcome he would again be as a guest whenever he liked to come there. Emily had not been well. She had not told her, Lady Marchmont added, that she was writing, for she was afraid of exciting her. The dear girl had, she had every reason to suppose, thrown away an opportunity of settling herself well in life, but it was not this that was troubling her. She would not speak thus openly were it not for the entire faith she had in the genuineness of Tom's attachment, which her foolish daughter had at one time doubted. Their hearts had, she felt assured, always been given to one another, and she was anxious to adopt any means in her power for the removal of an estrangement which so mere a misunderstanding had produced. She would be

anxious for an answer to her letter which, she hoped, would soon be followed by a visit.

On reading this most affectionate epistle Tom's first feeling was one of extreme vexation. If our hero were in love, it was not now with Emily. However this feeling of annoyance was succeeded by one of penitence, and a desire to go off at once and make atonement, if he could, for his unkind suspicions, and for his harsh demeanour towards this spoilt and somewhat wayward child whom he had so unwillingly offended. He again began to entertain the idea that his old friend might be unduly prejudiced against Emily and with this idea came the feeling that as a man of honour he could keep back no longer. He showed Mr. Maxwell Lady Marchmont's note, and announced his intention of starting off at once.

"If you took my advice," said his friend with decision, "you would remain where you are—however you have an undoubted right to please yourself."

The old man's advice was disregarded. Tom was again beginning to trust in Emily's love for him, and it was this renewed confidence that disposed him a second time to offer himself as her affianced, if not, as he had once been her slave.

Lady Marchmont had a certain insight into character, and our hero did exactly the thing which she expected he would do. It was, therefore, with no surprise that she recognized

his form from her look-out window as he rode up the avenue, and it was with a feeling of delight as well as of unfeigned admiration that she watched him. None of their male visitors came up to Tom in the matter of good looks, and though her ladyship cared but little for the qualities of the heart, yet she considered that exterior advantages were by no means to be despised. She had provided against the contingency of our hero's sudden re-appearance, and had taken advantage of the listlessness which Emily's disappointed hopes had engendered, by persuading her, on this particular morning, to take her breakfast in bed.

Tom was ushered into the drawing-room, and in a moment or two afterwards Lady Marchmont had almost thrown herself into his arms.

“Where is Emily?” was our hero’s first question.

“She is not yet out of her room,” was the reply, “but I will go and tell her you are here, and I think the news will soon bring her down.” Then making up a very pitiful face, “Poor Emily!” she added, “she has had a weary time of it since you left.”

Tom’s honest heart was now open to receive any impressions which her Ladyship might think fit to put into it. One thing she had already convinced him of—it was that her daughter had suffered through his want of consideration. This idea aroused his generous feelings to an extent which a prudent counsellor would have told him might prove in the end unsafe.

Emily did really contrive to look very pale and very interesting as she came down to meet her old lover, and her manner as he rushed towards her, was perfect. Tom felt himself again strongly drawn towards her.

"I don't know how to express sorrow enough," he said, "for having acted so hastily, but I feel I have your forgiveness, and I hope I need never have occasion to ask for it again."

A smile far sweeter than words was all Tom got in reply. It was however enough, and as he put his arm round the fair girl's waist, and imprinted a fervent kiss upon her forehead, she seemed gracefully to cling to him for support, while he mentally resolved that nothing but death should ever again disunite them.

The whole family were unanimous in welcoming back the deserter, for such they now assumed to look upon him ; and so thorough a penitent did he become under Lady Marchmont's dexterous management, that he was gradually bringing himself to think that it must have been some kind of mental hallucination that had, on the occasion of his last visit, aroused to such an extent his feelings of jealousy and anger.

"I am sorry, dear Tom," said Lady Marchmont, as the former was taking his departure, "that we shall be leaving home to-morrow on our annual visit to my sister ; you are however, a free man now, and you must take an occasional run up to town while we are there."

Our hero at once assented to this proposal, whereupon followed a most affectionate leave taking between the future mother and son-in-law. In truth her Ladyship did really feel that she loved Tom a little, but then she loved rank and station a good deal more.

That delicious state of intoxication into which our hero's first engagement had thrown him was gone, not now to be recalled, and as soon as he was away from the influence of Emily's smile, and of her mother's artful and persuasive tongue, he became painfully aware of the fact. However, he tried to hope that it would return again, and in the meanwhile he would, he thought, content himself with that inward peace which a consciousness of having done the right thing is sure to produce in the mind of an upright and honourable man.

The Annesleys had just left on our hero's return, and he was enabled in consequence at once to announce his re-engagement.

“I am sorry for you,” was all the reply the widower vouchsafed to make him. Tom felt it to be by no means a satisfactory one, while it disposed him immediately to constitute himself Emily's warm champion. He found it too a good deal easier to fight for her than to love her. His efforts, though, were all in vain. The more he resounded her praises, her amiability, her long-suffering and forgetfulness of all past unkindness—the more he dwelt on all this, the more

impatient and surly did the old man become. He pooh—pooh'd Tom's assertions ; laughed, as the latter thought maliciously, at the idea of the young beauty's health having failed her under the blighting influence of our hero's neglect, and at last he got so impatient of the subject that he took to loading his favourite spaniel with tender epithets by way of ending it. This last mode of proceeding Tom took much to heart, for it seemed to him to imply an invidious comparison between Fan's merits and those of his betrothed. He felt himself becoming uneasy and angry too. His faith in Emily was not so entirely re-assured, but that his shrewd old friend's remarks had the effect of throwing a considerable damper upon it. He was determined he would hear no more of them ; and so, whilst unconsciously as it were he pressed his fingers to his aching temples, he took up a candle and lighted it with a trembling hand. Before leaving the room he sought, however, for one reassuring look from his friend—that friend who was secretly dearer to him now than her to whom he was about to pledge himself by vows of eternal constancy. Mr. Maxwell marked the look, and instinctively he comprehended what it expressed. He got up and shook Tom's hand while a tear stood in his eye.

“I have been very hard upon you,” he said. “You have after all acted like a man of honour, and I believe I am scarcely justified in blaming you. I must, however, still think that first engagement a mistake, seeing that it has thus,

perhaps unavoidably, led to a second. I can now only hope that your cousin may by this time have learnt to value you at your real worth. Should this be the case your marriage may turn out happily yet, and trust me, if it does, there is no one who will rejoice in it more sincerely than myself."

Tom kissed as he pressed warmly the hand that was given him, and in doing so he moistened it with a tear. It was the tear of gratitude which the old man's burst of feeling had produced. Our hero felt as he retired to his room, that he had one friend in the world in whose affection he could place implicit faith—it was the friend he had just quitted.

In consequence of the promise given him by Lord Worthington, Mr. Maxwell had been induced to write and ask him for his interest in favour of Tom in the filling up of a small Government Office which had recently become vacant. On the day following that of our hero's re-engagement, his Lordship's answer arrived. Unfortunately, he said, another applicant had been beforehand, but he ended his letter with an assurance that all the interest he possessed should, when another opening occurred, be given in favour of the young Baronet, who, he added, was in his opinion calculated to perform efficiently the duties of any position in which he might be placed.

For every vacancy there were always sure to be plenty of applicants, and so the interest of Lord Worthington having failed him on this occasion, Mr. Maxwell began to

entertain less confident hopes as regarded that nobleman's willingness to serve his young friend. He thought it, in consequence, only fair to put before the latter the doubts he entertained on the subject.

"Tom," he said, "I cannot conscientiously persevere in buoying you up with what may, I fear, in the end prove false hopes. I believe I was a little too confident with regard to Lord Worthington's good intentions towards you. A public man has so much to do and to think about, and there are so many coming in his way and asking for his good will, that it is quite impossible he can satisfy all. Were it not that you are hampered with this engagement," (Tom winced at the expression), "I should have recommended you to travel for a time, before commencing in earnest your studies for the bar. I believe that is the profession you have been thinking about adopting."

"It is," was the reply.

"It seems time now," Mr. Maxwell proceeded, "to think of finding a tenant for your house. The workmen will, I am told, be out of it in the course of a month, and I am inclined to recommend your having an advertisement put at once into the *Times*."

"I will see about it immediately," said Tom. "I feel though," he ventured on observing, "that I should not like to be without a home to take Emily to, when I have made her my wife. I must of course be in London while studying

for the bar, and I think I had better look out for one there."

"I think you had," observed Mr. Maxwell, "but remember, Tom, it is absolutely necessary that you should practise the strictest economy, for a time at all events, unless you are indifferent about still more encumbering your estate. Do you know if Lady Marchmont intends giving her daughter anything?"

"I should fancy nothing," said Tom, colouring deeply as he spoke. He was expecting to hear a charge of narrowness preferred against his future mother-in-law who, together with the whole family, he was at present resolved on defending. "It is not, I am sure, what I ever in the least looked for, and Lady Marchmont could, I should fancy, but ill-afford to diminish her income."

"Then her Ladyship cannot, of course, complain of your taking her daughter, in the first instance, to a poorish kind of home, if she declines helping you to the means of providing her with what she might think a more suitable one."

"Of course not," said our hero with emphasis. "Lady Marchmont must know the state of my affairs as well as, if not better, than I know them myself. She has never from the first made the slightest objection on that score, and our circumstances are, I suppose, sure to mend at the time we may be needing more money."

"Well," observed Mr. Maxwell, "you must still look on

my house as your home as long as you are a single man. When you become two instead of one this arrangement must of course cease."

Tom entirely recognized the wisdom and justice of this remark, and he tried to hope that when he and his betrothed were actually united, his old friend would learn to realize the fact of their being one instead of two, rather than the reverse, and that he would in time become as like a father to Emily as he had hitherto been to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

TOM'S VISIT TO TOWN.

IT was Emily Marchmont's first introduction to fashionable life. She had at once been plunged into a vortex of dissipation, and the gay world by which she was surrounded had unanimously pronounced her to be the beauty of the season. Mrs. Gaystone was delighted to have as her guest one who helped so considerably towards rendering her parties attractive, and Emily was receiving from all quarters as much adulation as the fondest lover of it could desire. One long and affectionate letter had been addressed by her to Tom the day after her arrival in town. Since then her time had been so fully occupied that her epistolary style had been growing more concise, though it was still quite sufficiently affectionate to satisfy our hero. He had as yet received no special invitation

up to town, and his recollection of the Grayfield gaieties in which he had participated, were not sufficiently pleasant to make him anxious to enter into those which were now made by Emily an excuse for the few hurried lines with which she favoured him.

They had been away for upwards of a fortnight when Lady Marchmont one morning observed to her youngest daughter, "I think when you next write to Tom you should try and persuade him to come up to town for a few days. You know he promised he would, and I suspect he must now be waiting for a particular invitation."

"Do then, ask him here," said Mrs. Gaystone. "I have a spare room to offer him till the end of next week, and I should like of all things to see this future connection of my own."

"I am sure Emily is very much obliged to you for the kind proposal," said Lady Marchmont, a little annoyed that her daughter should have left her to return thanks for their hostess's hospitable intentions. "You can hardly fail of being pleased with Tom, and I think," she added looking at her daughter with some asperity, "and I think Emily is a very fortunate girl in having so good a prospect before her."

Lady Marchmont was feeling really angry at her daughter's listless, apathetic manner of receiving this invitation for her betrothed. Among the crowd of Emily's admirers her mother

had not yet despaired another actual suitor to supply Tom's place, should he again be cast off, indeed she was feeling that the young lady might be very well satisfied with what she had won. Juliana and Georgie were still hanging on hand, for Georgie's sort of half engagement with Harry did not, in her Ladyship's opinion, count for much. She had therefore quite determined that this one certainty of settling a daughter satisfactorily was not a second time to be relinquished. Neither had Emily herself any idea of renouncing her prize, but she would have wished to have enjoyed a little longer in perfect freedom the luxury of admiration. Tom's jealous guardianship might, she feared, impose a restraint upon her to which this wilful beauty felt she could but ill submit.

Lady Marchmont, did not, of course, in the least enter into her daughter's views on this point, and she was on the other hand extremely anxious that her future son-in-law should be thrown in the way of what she considered to be good society. She was aware of his inclination to make himself independent of the prejudices of the world, and this disposition, if indulged in, might she believed be the cause of his becoming unpopular in his own neighbourhood. Should he too, by upholding a set of foolish, old-fashioned notions, bring not only himself, but Emily likewise into disrepute, the case would be sad indeed. She thought it therefore her duty to counteract this bias, and, to gain her end, no plan she felt was so likely as that of giving him a taste for the pleasures

of fashionable life. As soon, therefore, as she found herself alone with her daughter she proposed that the latter should at once make known to Tom her aunt's wishes.

"But mamma," said the beauty listlessly, "I think Tom is sure to be engaged next week. He told me when he last wrote that he was going into Wales with Mr. Seymour."

"But he did not tell you *when* he was going."

"No, mamma, but they are sure to be starting soon."

"Well, Emily," said her mother sharply, "as you seem so unwilling to give Tom your aunt's message, I shall write and inform him of it myself."

"I don't think you will get Tom to put himself out of the way to please you or Aunt Julia either," said the young lady petulantly. "You know how he hates anything in the shape of gaiety."

"He will like it when he becomes a little more used to it; and I must tell you, Emily, that you are betraying anything but good feeling in speaking as you do."

Emily carefully refrained from showing anything like penitence for her ungracious behaviour, and, taking up a novel, she diverted herself with it until it was time for her to dress for her morning's ride.

Her mother, in the meanwhile, seated herself at the writing-table, and applied herself earnestly to the task of persuasion.

A few days in Belgravia would, in her opinion, be more

conducive to our hero's mental improvement than weeks or even months passed amongst the Welsh mountains ; and so, to win his consent to Mrs. Gaystone's proposal, her Ladyship went considerably beyond the limits of truth. Her sister was, she said, most anxious to make Tom's acquaintance, and it was the single opportunity she had of welcoming him as a guest during the time of their visit. Emily was afraid his Welsh excursion might interfere with his coming, though it would, her Ladyship knew, delight her daughter not a little were he to postpone it for her sake. Dear Emily was but a child in some respects, and having been mortified at Tom's non-compliance with a former wish of hers, she could not bear the idea of receiving another refusal. This was why "mamma" had been deputed to write for her, but our hero might depend upon it that Emily would be the one to feel most gratified should the invitation be accepted, though they were *all* prepared to receive him with open arms.

The letter had the desired effect. Lady Marchmont had contrived to make Tom truly penitent for faults towards Emily which he had never committed, and his penitence showed itself in an extreme anxiety to conform for the future, if possible, to her wishes. Indeed, so impressed was he with the necessity he conceived himself to be under of obeying his fair mistress's behests, that he decided at once, though unwillingly, to walk over to the Rectory for the purpose of

asking his friend if he would mind having the excursion postponed for a few days.

Mr. Seymour agreed good humouredly to the proposal, though by so doing he put himself, as Tom well knew, to some little inconvenience. We must add that he felt far more disposed than did Mr. Maxwell to pardon our hero for thus disarranging his plans. Though the latter had shown a momentary disposition to forgive his young friend for plunging a second time into so ill-assorted an engagement, he was, nevertheless, indulging in a general feeling of anger towards him. The old man's wishes had been father to his hopes and he conceived himself to be almost justified in thinking that, as Tom had paid Laura so much attention, and expressed for her so large an amount of admiration, he should have gone a little further and that, instead of again falling, like a fool, into Lady Marchmont's meshes, he should have cut short all negotiations in that quarter by boldly declaring his attachment to Miss Annesley. It was with a doleful countenance that he had communicated to the family at Bolton Court this piece of folly on the part of his young friend ; and Laura, with all that kindly sympathy that was in her nature, had thought it fitting that she should look doleful too.

This circumstance led the widower to suppose that Tom had already succeeded in winning the heart of that young lady, and since then his manner had become irritable and

impatient if ever the slightest allusion were made by the Baronet to his matrimonial scheme. He therefore growled a good deal in the present instance at his young friend's changeableness of purpose, taxed him with a want of consideration for the curate, and wound up by asserting that, nothing better was to be expected from one who had blindly surrendered himself to the caprices of a spoilt and foolish girl.

Tom was not in the happiest frame of mind when he started on his three day's visit to town. These wordy buffettings from his old friend he had found dispiriting. Young, too, as he was, he had been already *désillusioné*, and those dreams of perfect felicity which he had once indulged in were, so it seemed, to be his no longer. The warm reception he met with had, however, the effect of a cordial on his jaded spirits. Emily had no thought of loosing her hold over her lover, and so she welcomed him with such smiles as almost rendered him again her worshipper, while Lady Marchmont's honied words might have convinced any trusting and generous man of twenty-two that she entertained for him all the affectionate feelings of a mother. There was a dinner-party on the day of his arrival, and it was again his lot to be seated by the side of the talented Lady Mandeville, whose conversational powers had so much drawn him out when he was staying with her at Granby Hall. It was evident that our hero was altogether approved

of by that fashionable and charming votary of the world, and this circumstance induced Emily to take a most favourable view of her lover. She thought, as she gave him an occasional bright and happy look across the table, what a handsome fellow he was. He must have been out of temper on that particular evening when, having Mrs. Youngfellow by his side, he had appeared to so little advantage as to have induced that very discerning personage to vote him a fool. Temper was, in Emily's estimation, a very small fault when compared with ignorance of fashion's ways and laws. Having just now jumped at the conclusion that our hero was neither ignorant nor stupid, but precisely the reverse, she brought herself into a very happy frame of mind as regarded him. Tom, too, was again spell bound by her beauty and flattered by her pleased and happy looks.

Emily had never quite got over the disgrace she had been subjected to, in having it supposed by her hunting friends that she had actually consented to marry a man who did not know how to ride, and now she was bent on letting it be seen that her accepted lover had quite mastered this most important branch of a man's education. If she could but prevail on him to ride with her in Rotten Row, all his former shortcomings should, she had resolved, be quite blotted from her memory. However, he had declined hunting with her, and she felt uncertain as to whether some

equally cogent reason might not induce him to refuse her request on this occasion.

She would, at all events, try what she could do in the way of persuasion, and, as she and her sisters had been allowed to bring their horses with them, there could be no other difficulty save as regarded the winning of Tom's consent. On the following morning, therefore, breakfast being over, and our hero having made his appearance in the drawing-room, Emily, with a pretty, insinuating look and manner, thus addressed him.

“Tom, dear, I have quite set my heart on having another ride with you. It is such fun having a good canter in the Row, and this is just the morning for a ride. You won't, I am sure, refuse me a second time.”

“Refuse you!” exclaimed Tom in the accent of surprise. “I should think not. I shall be delighted to ride with you if I can only manage to get a horse. You know, Emily, I am at your service entirely during the time I am here.”

Emily was pleased at her lover's gallant way of acceding to her proposal, and as he was willing to face the bustle and crowd of Rotten Row on her account, she felt sure she could now easily induce him to renounce all his other objectionable notions. These notions had, however, been talked over in so general and vague a way at the time when the separation between her and her lover had occurred, that she would have been entirely at a loss to designate, if asked, in what they all

consisted. Having, though, by this time, entirely forgotten her own share in the quarrel, she was indulging herself with the conviction that it had been simply our hero's objectionable notions that had set them at variance.

"There can be no difficulty at all about a horse," she observed, looking remarkably happy and remarkably pretty as she spoke. "We have Turpin and the Duke with us, and Juliana and Georgie mean to drive to-day with mamma and Aunt Julia."

Tom was pleased at finding how much he had it in his power to gratify the fair enchantress. Lady Marchmont was likewise pleased at seeing how smoothly affairs were going on, and both mother and daughter seemed equally disposed to be in every way gracious and amiable towards our hero.

The interesting position which Emily occupied as an engaged young lady had, in addition to her remarkable beauty, won for her an amount of admiration and devotion which some men would have feared to bestow on her, had she come among them as one among the numerous competitors in the matrimonial market.

Her graceful horsemanship was reckoned, even by the most *blases*, as one among the few sights worth seeing, and on this occasion there were assembled together a more than usual number of her adorers.

Our hero was most favourably passed under review by the young ladies, who would many of them probably have

considered themselves fortunate had they, instead of Emily, occupied towards him the position of bride elect. So much indeed was he made the object of contemplation by the fashionable crowd in the midst of which he found himself, that Lord Scamperwell, that lady-killer, was almost fancying himself neglected. His Lordship had arrived in town a few days previously, and had already heard the wonderful beauty and the fine horsemanship of Miss Emily Marchmont duly commented on at his club. He had, in consequence, a fancy for renewing his acquaintance with this reigning belle, and so on this particular morning he turned his horse's head in the direction of the Park at the approved hour, in the hope of finding the former object of his admiration there. On arriving he observed the eye-glasses all turned one way and his own was, in consequence, directed towards this general point of attraction. At once his Lordship's naturally keen vision described the beauty with her lover at her side. A sight of the latter was an event he had hardly anticipated. Emily's face was turned away as his Lordship passed her, for she was in the act of bowing to one of her numerous admirers. Tom was taking a general survey of the gay scene, and he too had failed to notice Lord Scamperwell in particular. That aristocrat just now recognized Lady Blanche Matcham, with whom he had amused himself by carrying on a grand flirtation during the last season. He rode up to her, and, after the usual salutations, Lady Blanche inquired with something

of malice in her tone, "Have you been here long? I have been so occupied in looking at Miss Emily Marchmont and her cousin, the Baronet, that I am afraid I have been eschewing a good many of my acquaintances. They are both so handsome and such beautiful riders."

Lady Blanche's words were just a little mortifying to his Lordship, who liked no man's equestrian powers to be admired but his own. He was, however, determined that his old flame should not triumph in the knowledge of the fact that she had succeeded in annoying him, and so he observed with great apparent *sang froid*,—

"Miss Emily Marchmont is an old acquaintance of mine, and we must all admit that her beauty is unrivalled. She seems to have been teaching her cousin the art of horsemanship to some effect. They could not prevail on him to follow the hounds in the winter, he was so afraid of getting laughed at; and certainly for a man who never probably till lately mounted anything better than a donkey, he does ride remarkably well."

After thus giving expression to his sentiments Lord Scamperwell bowed familiarly to Lady Blanche, who returned his bow with much *insouciance*. He then guided his horse among the gay throng, with the full intention of recommencing his intimacy with Emily, and of again monopolising her if he could. Soon his ready glance detected a second time the object of his search, and riding up to her

he seemed bent on claiming this reigning beauty as a very intimate friend of his own.

“I’m delighted to see you,” he said, bowing carelessly to Tom as he spoke, then turning his horse he placed himself by Emily’s side.

“I heard yesterday that you were here,” he went on, “and so I have been looking out for you. Your mother and sisters are in town, are they not? I and some others are making up a party to go to Greenwich to-morrow, and I want you all to come with us.”

“Miss Marchmont is engaged to me for to-morrow,” said Tom sternly and decisively, and as he spoke he returned his Lordship’s stare with a look that showed he was not going to be trifled with. That noble peer observed the look, and seeing besides that Emily gave no indication of yielding to his wishes, he left her side as promptly as he had placed himself there, and got over the embarrassing situation as well as he could by hailing some masculine acquaintance, and by making a great show of pleasure at the recognition.

The distant demeanour assumed by Emily towards his Lordship had a great effect upon our hero. By it the injustice of his former suspicions was made still more apparent to him, and he felt at the same time keenly alive to the constancy of that love which had prompted his betrothed to refuse for his sake, so brilliant a connection, and this in

spite of his unreasonable fit of jealousy and the quarrel he had got up with her thereupon.

The evening was spent at the opera, and as Tom, with Emily at his side, was drinking in Grisi's and Mario's dulcet notes, he felt more and more disposed to believe in his cousin's love for him and to hope that his visions of earthly bliss were after all to be realized. Emily was indeed unmistakably happy for she was enjoying all the luxury of being one of the centres of attraction, and as the opera-glasses were raised towards the box which they occupied, she was pleased to think what a handsome man was sitting beside her.

Our hero positively enjoyed the experience he was now having of London fashionable life, and when on the day of his intended departure his hostess pressed him to remain a little longer, he felt sorely tempted to yield to her persuasions. However it was Saturday and as he had promised Mr. Seymour that he would be ready to start with him at an early hour on the following Monday, he thought it best to determine on not a second time breaking his engagement with him.

Lady Marchmont had hitherto troubled herself but little about the state of her future son-in-law's finances, and she had no idea how exceedingly low they were. She took it for granted that his wealthy friend did, and that he would continue to help him, neither could she bring herself to imagine that Tom would ever be actually reduced to the necessity of letting the family residence. Our hero was, on his part, feeling a sort of

reluctance to telling her Ladyship how scantily he was at present provided with means, nor did he conceive it necessary that he should do so, as he supposed that she must be as well acquainted with his embarrassments as he was himself. However, he meant to have some conversation with her on the subject before taking his leave, and he wished to ask her at the same time how soon he might be allowed to claim Emily as his bride. A letter had arrived for him by the post, and Lady Marchmont guessed by the large, bold hand that it could be from no other than Mr. Maxwell. It had evidently given satisfaction to the recipient of it, and she drew from this circumstance the inference that it was to announce the old man's intention of settling some handsome sum upon his *protégé* previous to the marriage.

Fortified with this hope it was with a very gracious look of understanding that she bowed her assent to our hero's request that he should have a little private conversation with her. While addressing Lady Marchmont, Tom had given a glance at Emily expressive of his wish that she should be present at the conference. It is only due to Emily to say that she had never yet given money-matters a thought ; but, taking it for granted that her lover's purse must be a full one, she had, nevertheless, been anticipating some handsome present from him before he bade her adieu. By reason of this hope she had been taking an unusual interest in the contemplation of the gorgeous jewellery displayed in the shop-windows,

and now she was feeling sure that her expectation as regarded bridal presents was going to be realized.

Finding a certain awkwardness in himself commencing the always disagreeable subject of money-matters, our hero thought he would make Mr. Maxwell's letter useful in the way of leading up to it. Informing her therefore that he had just received a letter from his friend, he at once put the note into her Ladyship's hand. She eagerly scanned the contents of it, which were as follows : —

DEAR TOM,

Though I hope to see you so soon I still think it as well that I should let you know before you leave town that I have heard of what seems to be a very desirable tenant for the hall. Mr. Dawson, the applicant, is a man of property, and he wishes to take a place in the country for three years, while pulling down and re-building his own residence. He is quite willing to give the sum fixed on by Jenkins, and he wishes to occupy the place almost immediately. Mr. Dawson is a man of high character, and I strongly recommend you to close with the offer at once. An additional five hundred a year will be of great importance to you just now ; indeed I suspect that all thought of your marrying would at present be out of the question, except by means of this help to your at present very limited income. The day after you left I heard of the death of Mr. Carden. You will be glad to hear that I have given the living of Maplewood to Seymour.

I am, yours truly,

ARTHUR MAXWELL.

“ So you have decided on letting the old place ! ” said Lady Marchmont with vexation in her tone.

“What is Granby Hall going to be let?” exclaimed Emily, with a blank look of disappointment which made Tom feel for the moment miserable.

“Why I thought,” he observed addressing himself to her Ladyship, “that I made you aware of my intentions long ago. You surely know how poor I am, and how impossible it would be for me to live there myself.”

“I should have supposed,” replied his interlocutor scornfully (she forgot all prudence in the passion of the moment) “I should have supposed, that had Mr. Maxwell really felt for you the interest he has professed, he would have been guided by a more liberal spirit in his conduct towards you now. I consider his behaviour to be mean and ungenerous, and I would say the same even though it were to the old man himself.”

“You must not say it again though to me,” replied Tom, while indignation fired his eye, and compressed for a moment the naturally flexible movement of his lip. “I will have nothing said in my presence against the noblest and the most generous man that ever lived.”

The indignant tone and manner of our hero silenced and abashed her Ladyship, and her usual readiness at an emergency having forsaken her, she thought it best to retire while Emily remained only to weep.

Her tears were too much for Tom.

“You are, I see, disappointed,” he said to her with

tenderness, "and it is very natural that you should be so. I would not, I assure you, Emily, let your old home be occupied by strangers if I could help it, but it seems, at present, the only thing to be done. It is though my intention to study for the Bar, and in a few years I hope I shall be rich enough to take you back to your old home. With you to work for I shall begrudge myself no amount of toil."

Emily would not recognise the devotion to her own fair self contained in these words. They merely conveyed to her mind a most unpleasing idea of laborious poverty; and they had, in consequence, the effect of making her look exceedingly cross.

Tom's spirit fell, and he could, like Emily, have cried with vexation; but as his pride kept him from such a betrayal of weakness, he maintained instead a look of dignified annoyance.

"Emily," he said at last most seriously, "I offer you for the second time the chance of giving me up; but, remember, your decision now must be final, and that no power on earth will induce me a third time to come forward."

"You always seem so eager," said Emily reproachfully, "to break away from your engagement the moment any difference of opinion occurs between us. I can't help feeling sorry ——" and she broke forth into sobs—sobs so violent that they took away from her the power of finishing her sentence.

"And for your sake I feel sorry too," said Tom, by way of soothing her. "I must think, though," he added with gentleness, "that you have hardly accepted the necessity as kindly as you might have done. It would drive me mad, pretty nearly, if, after our marriage, I should find that you had repented when it was too late. I shall be satisfied if you will give me the assurance that there is no reason for my fears; and indeed, Emily, if my best endeavours at rendering you happy can be of any avail, you will hardly fail of being so."

Emily condescended to return these promises with a smile which induced Tom to press his lips to hers in token of reconciliation.

"Then you will be content to cast your lot with mine, poor as I am? Is it so, Emily?" he added, by way of assuring himself by word of mouth that she was still willing to accept his hand, even though she should have to face poverty in doing so.

"That was quite settled three weeks ago," she replied, with a certain amount of peevishness in her tone; then, observing that her manner was not unmarked by her cousin,

"I never doubted *you*," she added more sweetly. "Why do you hurt my feelings by doubting *me*?"

Most heartily did our hero wish he could put aside his misgivings as, throwing his arm round the slender waist of his betrothed, he murmured the desire he really felt to trust

her still. He did *not* trust her though: he had again lost his faith in her affection, and he wished in his heart that the engagement were annulled. He felt however that he could not release himself from it as Emily had resolved otherwise, but he gave up his intention of asking for an early day for the marriage; and Lady Marchmont was quite willing that he should leave without anything on that score being definitely arranged. He returned to Maplewood bound by a chain which, as his observant friend soon discovered, was not one of Cupid's manufacture. It was, indeed, with no pleasurable sensation that Tom looked forward to that day, when he would at the altar have solemnly to take those vows upon him, the chief of which it seemed as if it were no longer in his power to perform. But public opinion and a man's own code of honour, forbid his adopting that line of conduct which common sense and common veracity would sometimes dictate, and our hero felt himself as it were constrained to unite his destiny with that of a woman whose love he now felt assured that he had never won, and who had, in consequence, lost that hold upon his affections which she had once possessed.

CHAPTER V.

HER LADYSHIP'S TEMPER BECOMES RUFFLED,

WE left Lady Marchmont and Emily each considerably discomposed, though both equally resolved that Tom was not a second time to be rashly thrown aside. Of the two, we believe that Lady Marchmont at present loved him a little the most. She had found out that our hero had a spirit which, were she to be thrown into actual conflict with him, would quite overmaster hers. She had, in consequence begun to fear him, and she had also learnt to admire him at the same time. However, all the strong and heroic virtues combined in one human form would not, in her Ladyship's estimation, have atoned for a want of position ; and of what use to Tom or to Emily either would be the fine old family seat, if they should have to let it during the best years of their lives ? Lady Marchmont was fully alive to the fact

that her daughter's personal attractions would add a lustre to the finest and the noblest mansion in the land, and she felt that Emily was never so much in her proper sphere as when the observed of all observers, or rather of that class of observers who constitute the *élite* of society. That eye of hers, so clear in its blueness—those silky, golden tresses which a Raphael would have loved to paint—that complexion so brilliantly fair, and those features, than which Phidias himself could not have sculptured finer—last of all, that singular grace which in queenly circles would have shone pre-eminent—charms such as these, were far too excellent to be thrown away upon the common herd; or in other words, upon that numerous class who have to earn an honest, unostentatious independence by the labours of their brain. It was amongst this class that Emily was now likely to be thrown, and the proud, ambitious woman shrunk from the very thought.

On Tom's departure, her Ladyship had in utter despair gone to talk over her daughter's prospects with her sister, and to give vent to her angry feelings by invectives against that false friend of our hero's, whose parsimony had occasioned such a downfall to her own and her daughter's hopes.

“The stupid, heartless old fool!” she had exclaimed. “I begin to suspect his vanity will lead him into making over all his means to some Hospital, and that neither Tom nor Harry will be much of matches for my daughters after all!”

"I think you were foolish," said Mrs. Gaystone in reply, "in allowing Emily to engage herself in such a hurry. So very pretty a girl was likely to meet, while here, with something more than mere admirers; indeed, I have reason for supposing that our member, Mr. Fraser, would have come forward had he not been given to understand that she was already engaged."

Mr. Fraser's claims to consideration consisted in his being in actual possession of a very fine fortune. He had also the credit given him of spending more money on his hunters than any other commoner in the kingdom. Having attained the age of forty, the long course of flattery he had been subjected to had produced in him a very large amount of self-esteem, and as yet he had never seen the woman who, in his own opinion, deserved the honour of standing towards him in the position of his wife. The remarkable confidence he felt in his own merits had been infused, by the force of sympathy, into the minds of all those ladies of fashion whose society he frequented, and mothers watched eagerly every symptom of dawning attention paid by him to their own unmarried daughters. However, they had never hitherto been able to catch hold of anything indicative of weakness in the strong citadel of Mr. Fraser's heart, for blondes and brunettes still continued to be regarded by him with an equal amount of courteous indifference. He knew but too well the snares that were being laid for him, and he

had determined that he would not be caught. One gracious observation that he had ventured one day on making to Mrs. Gaystone had been treasured up by that lady, and was now repeated for her sister's benefit.

"It seems," he had said, "a little unfair towards us single men that Miss Emily Marchmont should have been first introduced among us as already engaged."

The meaning or unmeaning hint which these words served to convey, was at once caught hold of by her Ladyship, and they produced in her mind a strong persuasion that, if Emily had still been free, the fastidious Mr. Fraser might have found her beauty sufficient to warm even so cold a heart as his. She felt both puzzled and mortified, and most heartily did she wish that she had not been in such a hurry to bind Tom a second time. The engagement had been so publicly announced that she felt it must proceed now, unless a hope amounting to a positive certainty should arise of something better turning up. Mr. Fraser's flattering speech amounted to no certainty after all. His heart was decidedly not inflammable, neither was his nature generous or confiding, and in trusting to him Lady Marchmont felt she might be trusting to a reed which, though not easily bent, would prove but a broken one to lean upon. Her Ladyship's doubts and perplexities put her thoroughly out of sorts, and Juliana was, as usual, the one who chiefly benefited by her ill-humour.

CHAPTER VI.

ACCEPTED ADDRESSES.

In happy unconsciousness of all that was being said, Lizzie had since we last parted from her been doing her best to overcome that secret attachment to our hero, which her heart told her she was guilty of, and to effect this purpose, she had been occupying herself more than was her wont, with her father's comfort and happiness. Mr. Lindsay on his part was feeling that he could hardly do enough in the way of tenderness, to atone for those few harsh words which he had been betrayed into using towards his dearly loved child at the time of Jacob's anticipated visit. This way of proceeding on either side had had the effect of binding the parent more closely to the child, and the child to the parent, and though they each had their secret cause of disquietude, they were still happy in one another. Lizzie could not altogether

forget Tom, while her father's affairs were continuing to make him anxious, and causing him to feel yet more acutely his disappointment at his daughter's opposition to Jacob's suit. They each contrived, however, effectually to hide their secret trouble from the other, and while Mr. Lindsay supposed his child to be altogether happy and contented, the latter hoped it might be the same with him.

About four weeks had elapsed since that eventful visit to Lizzie's native village had occurred, when one afternoon towards the close of April, Mr. Lindsay and his daughter were just starting for their afternoon's walk. There was a coldish wind and Lizzie had been coaxing her father into wearing his great coat.

"Why, you are making a perfect milksop of me!" the latter had exclaimed. "How do you think I could ever get on without you?"

His words expressed some inclination to resent the care that was being bestowed upon him, but his look altogether contradicted his words.

"Perhaps you will never have to try!" was Lizzie's answer to her father's observation, as she threw her arms round his neck and gave him an affectionate kiss.

Just at this moment a rap was heard at the door, and Mr. Lindsay at once went forward to open it. The action brought Jacob Birch into view, the apparition startling Lizzie considerably, and causing her colour palpably to rise.

"How are you?" he inquired of Lizzie, with affectionate familiarity, but, he added, "I need hardly ask with that fine bloom on your cheek." Then turning to Mr. Lindsay, he said in a more serious tone, "I am sorry to say I have very important and distressing news for you, though you may perhaps have heard it already."

"What news?" faltered Mr. Lindsay. The poor man's face had turned to a ghastly paleness, and his hand shook like an aspen leaf as beckoning to Jacob to precede him into the little sitting room, he and Lizzie followed close behind.

"I have," Jacob commenced, "this morning received a letter from my friend Carter. His property, I believe, adjoins yours. I will give you the letter, as I think it best you should read for yourself that part of it which concerns you."

Pointing to the particular paragraph, the lawyer handed the letter to Mr. Lindsay. The latter could hardly hold it, so great was his nervous agitation, but his daughter came to his assistance, and as she placed it conveniently for his inspection, she read it anxiously herself at the same time. We will transcribe for our readers the agitating news which it contained.—

"I am sorry to say that fellow Dyke, whom Lindsay fixed upon as the fittest person he could find to manage his property in his absence, has turned out a thorough rogue. After borrowing a sum of money from myself, he has decamped with everything he could get off Lindsay's estate.

In addition to this, he has, I'm told, raised money upon it, which it is supposed the sale of the property will barely suffice to pay off. He has managed matters so cleverly that no-one has as yet the slightest idea where he is gone."

After reading the above, Mr. Lindsay leant back in his chair, closed his eyes and for a few minutes he appeared to be quite insensible. Poor Lizzie, in her alarm for her father, forgot all about the contents of the letter, and calling to him pathetically, she implored him to speak to her. After awhile his eyes gradually opened, and looking at her with pitying tenderness, he said, while one large tear fell on his cheek,

"Lizzie, my child, we are beggars—indeed, I am worse than a beggar, for I am in debt."

As he uttered these last words, Jacob came forward, placed his chair in front of the father and daughter, and again seating himself, "I will forget all about the debt," he said, "on one condition—it is that Miss Lindsay consents to become my wife."

A crimson flush appeared on Lizzie's cheeks as these words were being spoken, but in a moment it changed to a deathly paleness. Mr. Lindsay gave his daughter an imploring look—it seemed too much for her.

"I would die," she said, as distinctly as her sobs would allow, "I would die to help you. Papa! tell me,—what would you wish me to do?"

“To return the affection of my noble hearted friend, and to make him as good a wife as he deserves to have.”

Again Mr. Lindsay looked at his daughter with so fixed a gaze that it seemed as if his life or death hung upon her words. A sob was heard, it came from the very depths of Lizzie’s heart.

“Papa, I will do what you wish,” was her gasping reply, “only give me—oh, give me a little time !”

“But Lizzie,” said Jacob, drawing his chair still closer to her, and taking her hand in his, “I have waited for you so long already—too long for my own happiness. You know well that during the last twelve months pretty nearly, my heart has been wholly yours. You cannot therefore think me unreasonable in requiring a decisive answer now.”

“Accept him,” said her father entreatingly.

“If you wish it,” was Lizzie’s faint reply.

Jacob imprinted a kiss on her forehead, and in doing so he said,

“Your father has been a good friend to me, Lizzie, and I shall never forget to be grateful to him.”

“Thank you, thank you,” said Mr. Lindsay, much soothed by these flattering words. “I must,” he added, “assure you in return, that in surrendering to my benefactor the one treasure I possess, I am but acknowledging the heavy debt of gratitude I owe to him, while at the same time securing, as I hope and believe, the future welfare of my daughter.”

“ It is secured to her already, as far as my own ability goes,” was Jacob’s reply, and he turned towards Lizzie to imprint another kiss upon her forehead.

Happily for herself she was unconscious of the intended caress for she had fainted. Her father hastily rang the bell, and soon Rachel appeared. Having the most unlimited faith in his servant’s capacity for attending on and nursing this tenderly loved child, Mr. Lindsay at once made over to her the care of the fainting girl about whom he ceased to feel any alarm as soon as the first symptoms of recovery were perceptible. Her lot would, he felt assured, prove eventually a most fortunate one ; and when that womanly caprice which, as he had long admitted to himself, she shared in common with the rest of her sex, had given way to the convictions of sober sense, she would, he believed, be as ready as he was to recognise its advantages.

“ The painful news and the excitement altogether have been too much for the poor child,” he observed to Jacob as the latter, after having waited to see our heroine restored to consciousness, now rose to take his leave. The lawyer feared lest there should be a retraction of the engagement on Lizzie’s part were he to stay too long. He made, therefore, a press of business his excuse for a somewhat hurried departure expressed his intention of coming again in the course of a few days, and his hope that some definite arrangement might then be made with regard to the day of the marriage.

"We must try, too, and hit upon some plan for bringing your own affairs into better order," he said as he warmly shook Mr. Lindsay's hand, Lizzie having just sufficiently recovered to understand the purport of his words and to feel conscious of the fervid kiss which his present position as her accepted lover seemed to justify him in giving her.

Jacob was not ordinarily very confidential with his mother and sister; however, to make our heroine's promise doubly sure, he considered it expedient at once to inform them of it. He at the same time expressed a wish that they should both call at Beauchamp Cottage on the following day and assure his betrothed how satisfied they were with the engagement.

Mrs. Birch shed tears of heart-felt pleasure at its announcement. She hoped she was going at last to have one child in whose kindness she could look for some support. Rosa, on the contrary, assumed her most arrogant tone and manner, while giving her brother the benefit of her opinion on the subject. She only trusted, she said, that Jacob might not live to repent of allying himself to a poor, simple girl, who had no more idea than a baby of making her way in the world, and whose one conception of duty seemed to consist in coddling a foolish old man, with whom she had lived so long that she was now quite unfitted, in Miss Rosa's estimation, for a higher sphere of society. Jacob sneered at his sister's observations, and only hoped that she might ever have the luck to win from any man as much love as the girl

she professed to scorn had won from him. This retort cut into so sore a place that it caused Rosa positively to decline acceding to the request her brother had just been making ; whereupon she was informed by him that he did not imagine Lizzie would attach the smallest importance to the fact either of her calling or not calling ; though, should she ever again presume to offer any insult to his bride-elect, she should most surely live to repent of her folly.

Next to the rapturous feeling with which the thought of having at last won his prize inspired him, Jacob was principally occupied, as he journeyed towards Barking, with the question, how was he to dispose of his future father-in-law ? He had purchased Lizzie at a cost of three hundred pounds, and he did not consider that he had got his bargain at too dear a price, though to be still in any way hampered with her penniless sire was, he felt, a greater trial than he could well submit to. He made up his mind, therefore, that he would persuade Mr. Lindsay, the marriage being speedily got through, to go out to Jamaica, nominally to look after his affairs, though the lawyer was himself fully persuaded that, if matters were as bad as they had been represented, the voyage would do but little towards righting them. Once, however, in Jamaica, the ruined man might, he thought, contrive to find employment out there ; by which means he (Jacob) would himself be spared the inconvenience of seeing so near a connection starve at home.

Slowly and wearisomely did the hours glide away that April evening in the cottage which Jacob had so recently left. The silence and stillness that pervaded the household might well be compared to that which the presence of death occasions. Lizzie never uttered a word of regret at the step she had taken, and this self-imposed restraint seemed to render the burthen of her trouble all the heavier to her. Mr. Lindsay held obstinately to the idea which he found most congenial to his own feelings, believing that it was principally the news of his own disasters that rendered his daughter so unusually depressed.

“Things are often over-stated,” he had said by way of comforting her. “I still hope to find that my affairs are not, after all, in so ruinous a condition.”

“I hope you may,” had been Lizzie’s earnest but desponding reply; and then she had taken up a book and made a show of being absorbed in its perusal.

Ten o’clock came at last and with it the short family prayer; after which our heroine hung affectionately on her father as she gave him her parting kiss for the night. She knew that it was no want of love for her that had prompted his wish to surrender her to another, and the dread of being separated from this fond friend and protector, this dread it was that made her cling to him so tenderly before leaving him for the night.

It was Rachel’s habit to follow her young mistress into her

room for the purpose of seeing if she could do anything for her. On this occasion she lingered and lingered till Lizzie began to wish impatiently that she could be left alone with her sorrow. She felt that she must either tell her attendant nothing or everything, and she could not bring herself to do the latter. Perceiving at last that it was hopeless trying to get anything out of our heroine without the help of a direct question, Rachel resolved on trying this last alternative.

“Thou hast never gone and engaged thyself to Jacob Birch,” she said, uttering the words as if they were stinging her.

Not a word was spoken in reply, and Lizzie had discovered some motive for turning away her face.

This proceeding was in Rachel’s estimation a certain admission of the fact in question, and at once she descended the stairs and knocked at the parlour door.

“Come in,” said Mr. Lindsay, startled at so unusual an event, and fearing lest his daughter should be again taken ill.

“I beg thy pardon for intruding,” said Rachel, at once availing herself of the summons, while her manner betrayed a certain amount of nervousness mingled with determination. “Thee must forgive me if I speak too plain,” she went on, “but I am come to tell thee it can never be for thy daughter’s happiness or for thine own either, if thou should’st still determine on giving her to such a man as Jacob Birch.”

“Tut, tut, tut ! what woman’s nonsense is this ?” exclaimed Mr. Lindsay angrily. Lizzie’s uncomplaining silence had helped him to glide into the delusion that she had contentedly accepted her fate, and to be thus roughly aroused from this golden dream of his was too much for his equanimity. “I suspect Rachel,” he observed with severity, “that it is *you* who have been filling my daughter’s mind with these unreasonable prejudices against a man to whom both she and I are so deeply indebted.”

“Thou art not justified in saying that,” was Rachel’s calmly indignant reply. “Thy daughter’s dislike for Jacob Birch has been none of my prompting. It began when she was quite a little one, and her feelings towards him have never changed since then. Thee could’st not, believe me, do thy daughter a worse wrong than in persuading her to marry one whose evil qualities have, from his boyhood upwards, rendered him the object of her just dislike.”

“Pshaw !” exclaimed Mr. Lindsay impatiently. “How can you, Rachel, show such a want of common charity as to rake up the faults of a man’s boyhood as the means of bringing him into disrepute. Let’s hear no more of this ; and mind, Rachel, I shall think you the greatest enemy that I and my daughter have, should you persevere in talking to her in the manner in which you have just been speaking to me.”

Rachel retired in silence, leaving her master angry with her, ill at ease with himself, anxious for his daughter, and

altogether in an unenviable frame of mind. However he calmed himself at last, and as he fell asleep that night the hope was strong within him that he had found out now the secret of Lizzie's unaccountable prejudice. He had, as we know, a firm belief in the potency of woman's caprice, as well as in the power possessed by the weaker sex of working upon one another. Depend upon it, he thought, Jacob had in some way offended Rachel as a boy, and she, with true womanly resentment, had treasured up the slight. He decided on not attempting to argue with Lizzie, as he believed that no woman was open to argument where her feelings were concerned. She had at length found it possible to accept Jacob, and she would now, he felt assured, find it yet more possible, and without the help of argument, to esteem and love him too. He had given Rachel a strong caution, and he believed her to be too high principled to disregard it, and now that Lizzie would, as he hoped, be left to her own unbiassed judgment, she would surely have sense enough to see how good and generous was her lover.

Though Mr. Lindsay had in a way succeeded in calming his troubled spirit with these reflections, still it was with an unusual feeling of anxiety that he scanned his daughter's countenance as she entered their little sitting room on the following morning. It was pale and haggard, and wore a look which he had never seen on it before—a look which pierced him to the heart. He still clung to the hope that

the sudden announcement of his own ruin had thus so entirely changed her as to have rendered her not like herself and he determined, in consequence, on talking cheerfully about his prospects. The post had brought no West Indian letters for him, and he chose to consider this a good symptom. Had Dyke really proved such a scoundrel, some friend of Mr. Lindsay's would, so he now professed to think, have informed him of the fact. Mr. Carter had, it seemed, lent Dyke some money. Dyke had gone away, perhaps with no sinister intention, but merely, as might happen, on some urgent private affair, and if his creditor were a suspicious man this circumstance might have aroused his fears. To be sure Mr. Lindsay had been expecting large remittances by this last mail, but he would not at all despair of receiving them by the next. He had, he said, more than sixty pounds at the present in the bank, and they could therefore have for a time no urgent need of money.

Mr. Lindsay was altogether acting a part in speaking thus. In reality he believed his affairs to be in most a desperate state, and could he have left Lizzie in a comfortable home, he would have taken his first chance of sailing for Jamaica, and looking into them himself. He had, though, no friend with whom to trust her until she became Jacob's wife, and now his earnest desire was to see her in that position, and then to make one hard struggle to keep himself from sinking quite. His forced cheerfulness had not the effect of removing the gloom that

had fixed itself on his daughter's naturally expressive countenance, and poor Mr. Lindsay, who would have given almost his life to have won from her one happy look, was fairly puzzled to think what plan he could next pursue for the purpose of gaining this much desired end.

"Lizzie, my love," he said at last, "you are looking a little tired. I think a walk this fine morning would do us both good. Will you come with me and call on old James Cox? It is some time now since we have been there, and he will be thinking we have forgotten him."

The old man had the previous year been much employed by Mr. Lindsay, but for some months he had been laid up.

Lizzie at once acceded to her father's proposal. The walk across the fields to old James's cottage was a very pretty one, and there is something in the balmy air of a really fine spring day, that throws its cheering influence over the most flagging spirits.

Lizzie was not altogether insensible to the charm, and on her return a slight colour was perceptible on her cheek, a symptom of returning life and vigour, which was hailed by her father with a transport of thankfulness. The hope again became rife within him that all would yet be well as far as his daughter's happiness was concerned, and with this one desire of his heart accomplished, he was himself willing to face cheerfully any amount of hardship and poverty.

Mrs. Birch had called in their absence, and had written on

the card she left the regret she had experienced on finding them out, as well as her desire for a speedy interview with dear Miss Lindsay. Lizzie looked at the card and then quickly left the room, for she did not wish her father to see the tears that were streaming from her eyes. Jacob had then told his mother of the engagement, and all the village was certain soon to know of it too. She shrunk with horror from the thought of such publicity, for it seemed to her to render yet more binding the consent that had been extorted from her.

Our heroine had made up her mind that she would not add to her father's troubles by repining in his presence over her own. On hearing therefore the clock strike two, she washed her eyes and erased as well as she could the marks which her tears had left, and came down to dinner looking mournful enough it is true, but not sufficiently miserable to compel an out-spoken observation from Mr. Lindsay. The latter was still resolved on contemplating in his daughter's presence the cheerful aspect of affairs, and he talked away during the repast as if there were nothing further from his thoughts than his own probable ruin. His words were all marked by Lizzie, who thought them strangely inconsistent with his assertion on the previous day, and she became so puzzled at last that she knew not what to think. She was just making up her mind to throw out a hint that had she known sooner how little fear for the future her father really entertained she

would never have plunged herself into an engagement that was hateful to her, when she was hindered in her purpose by the sound of a visitor's rap. She started and trembled. Jacob's form had become to her like a nightmare which she was constantly dreading to see. However the door was opened and Rachel announced—not Jacob Birch, but Mr. Fanshaw.

The latter had availed himself of the chance offered him by a friend of getting a lift back in the evening, and had come over by the coach that same morning for the purpose of enjoying a sight of some of his old friends. The Rector and his wife he found were not at home, but Mary, the old servant there, had nevertheless insisted on his taking something to eat before he left the house. After having made one or two calls in the village, he walked over to Beauchamp Cottage in the hope of finding its two inmates at home, and of their making him welcome until eight o'clock, the hour at which he was to return.

Mr. Lindsay was glad to see this unexpected visitor, for he hoped his presence might prove a sort of distraction to his daughter. The first thought that presented itself to the mind of the latter was whether Mr. Fanshaw had been informed of her engagement, and it was a thought that disposed her to run away and hide herself, for she felt she could never face the shame of having so ill-omened an union mentioned in her presence. Fortunately, however, Jacob had charged his

mother and sister not for the present to betray his secret, and so Lizzie's fears proved to be unnecessary. She and her father were both disposed by nature to be hospitable, and Mr. Fanshaw's proposal met with a ready acquiescence.

It was so fine an afternoon that it tempted Mr. Fanshaw to ask his host and hostess if they would be disposed to accompany him on a visit to an old lady who had been kind to him formerly, and who lived some way off. Mr. Lindsay feared that this second walk might be too much for his daughter, but the latter would not hear of his going without her, and so the three started together. Mr. Lindsay's habit was to be sociable and fond of conversation, but on this occasion he left Lizzie to do all the talking for him, and it ended in Mr. Fanshaw's having it almost entirely to himself. Weighed down as he was by anxiety, the poor man had just sufficient energy left to enable him to toil at being cheerful for his daughter's sake, but when it came to keeping up a flow of words with an ordinary friend he felt himself to be altogether unequal to the task.

Her father's silence and his apparent pre-occupation were not unmarked by our heroine, who suspected therefrom that he was not so easy in his mind as he professed to be. As he sate at the tea-table he looked pale and absent, little imagining how much his inward thoughts were being studied by his daughter, while she was apparently occupying herself with Mr. Fanshaw's small but flowing talk. Lizzie's obser-

vations served to convince her that it was by rights, her turn now to be cheerful, and so, with something that might have faintly reminded him of her bright looks of old, "Papa," she said, "you have not yet had your second cup of tea."

Mr. Lindsay had not been feeling disposed this evening for his usual allowance, but his daughter's look and the wish it had expressed, caused him at once to put up the large cup and saucer which had been appropriated by her for his especial use, and to return the smile that had been given him. Lizzie's present idea was that it would be cruelty on her part were she to make any observation to her father that was at all likely to grate upon his ears, and when, on the departure of their guest, Mr. Lindsay, in his extreme anxiety to amuse her, proposed that he should read aloud, the offer was at once accepted with much apparent pleasure, and ten o'clock had struck before the kind parent betrayed any weariness of his task.

Rachel did not loiter long this night in her young mistress's apartment. She had been strictly prohibited the utterance of any sentiment on the subject which was now uppermost in her own thoughts, and the restraint she put upon herself to obey her master's orders in this particular was to her most irritating. Our heroine's mental agitation and her efforts at self-control were already, though unconsciously weakening her, and now, when left to herself, she sunk despondingly into a chair, and

with her elbows on her knees and her face buried in her hands, she seemed like one incapable of action. It was not till the last flickering rays of her candle reminded her how soon she would be in darkness, that Lizzie roused herself from her painful reverie. Chilled with the cold of a somewhat frosty April night she crept silently to her couch, where, if she found warmth, it was the only boon that awaited her, sleep having resolutely resolved on forsaking her in her misery.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR heroine's appearance on the following morning was such as to render her father very uncomfortable, but still he feared to speak. His hopes for Lizzie's future were in fact all founded on her union with Jacob. Should she expose him to the mortification of a second refusal, after she had once actually accepted him, her condition might be one of actual want, and, though he felt he could face poverty on his own account, his courage failed him when he thought of it as becoming his daughter's portion too.

A distressing silence was maintained between them until the arrival of the post served as a means of breaking it. The single letter which it brought was addressed to Mr. Lindsay in Jacob's hand-writing. However, enfolded within was one for Lizzie, which her father presented to her with a look that

seemed to entreat for a smile from her in return. Tears came instead as the note was deposited unopened on the cloth, and at some distance from the pale, sad-hearted girl to whom it was addressed. It was with a deep feeling of mortification that Mr. Lindsay marked the act, while doing his best to make believe that it had been unobserved by him. Having finished the letter that this chosen friend of his had addressed to himself,

“Lizzie, my love,” he said with a forced cheerfulness of tone, though with a timid and a downcast look, “my young friend seems in a great hurry to get possession of you—indeed he wishes the marriage to take place almost immediately.”

Lizzie’s colour mounted high, contrasting strangely with her former palor—and, if her father had ventured on looking her in the face, he would have marked the fixed intention which her features expressed of yielding to no such haste.

“The thought of so speedy a separation is very painful to me,” the poor man added with emotion, his own feelings now getting the better of him, “but it will, I know, be for your advantage, and I shall feel happy in the thought of having left you in such good hands.”

“Of having left me!” exclaimed Lizzie. “Papa what do you mean? You could not, you shall not leave me!” and the poor girl rose, threw her arms around his neck, and relieved herself by a perfect tempest of sobs.

“It is the only thing to be done,” said Mr. Lindsay as

soon as his own emotion allowed him to speak. "I have felt all along how necessary it was that I should go and look after my affairs, and I find Birch is altogether of one mind with myself on the subject. He is, I am sure, most kind and considerate—indeed he offers me, if I have no ready money by me, a small sum to help me out."

"Papa, you must not go back to Jamaica without taking me with you," moaned Lizzie. "I can't—I won't be left here," and the self-will of her character which of late years had usually lain dormant now seemed to assert itself with unwonted vigour.

"But my dear," pleaded her father, looking while he spoke as helplessly miserable as he had done when the first news of his calamity was announced to him, "but my dear, you have engaged yourself to another, and I must think that your duty now is more to him than to myself. Besides, my love, the additional expense would put it entirely out of the question my taking you with me."

"Oh, papa," said Lizzie in a fit of desperation, "don't be angry with me, but I feel I cannot marry Jacob Birch. You tell me your affairs may not be in so bad a state after all. I will be contented to let you go without me, if you will only allow me to remain here with Rachel till you return."

A deep groan was all the answer that our heroine got.

"Papa, dear, speak to me," Lizzie went on, still clinging to

the old man. “Tell me that it may be so. I will work night and day—I will indeed, to relieve you of your embarrassments; but the one thing I cannot do is to marry the man I detest.”

It was a strong word that last, and our heroine would hardly have made use of it had not the impetuosity of her feelings carried her away. It had the effect of working a revolution in the mind of her father. Looking up at his daughter, and smiling sadly as he did so,

“Lizzie,” he said, “you have been a good child to me, and if I have one fault to find with you it is that you have too much preferred my happiness to your own. I can now make you but a poor return for all the affection I have had from you, but I can assure you of this, that I would far sooner spend my remaining years in a jail than I would force you into a marriage that was distasteful to you. I had hoped, my love, that it was only some passing caprice, this dislike on your part for my generous friend. I cannot now but open my eyes to the fact that it is something more than this; and a marriage without love to hallow it can, I know, never be acceptable in the sight of God. Lizzie, if you were to tell me now that for my sake you would go through the ceremony as quickly as my young friend wishes, I should, after hearing those last words of yours, at once forbid it.”

“Oh, papa,” said Lizzie as she threw her arms round him and imprinted many fervant kisses on his careworn brow, “you have made me so very, very happy.”

"Ah! my love," was the reply, and Mr. Lindsay sighed deeply as he spoke, "I am afraid there is still a good deal of trouble in store for both of us. However, Birch has, I am sure, far too generous a nature to be hard upon me in my distress. I will write to him at once, my dear, and explain to him what your sentiments are."

"Thank you, thank you, papa," said Lizzie, and now with this one heavy burthen off her mind, she, with the buoyancy of youth and hope, allowed herself to think of no other. A woman's sense of honour is, it must be owned, less punetilious than a man's, and so our heroine could rejoice in her decision, and find her happiness unalloyed by any sense of shame at her intended breach of faith. Mr. Lindsay, on the contrary, looked upon it as a most serious affair; however, he blamed himself, and not his daughter, and still trusted in the disinterested generosity of his friend. He found it, however, to be about the most unpleasant task he had ever undertaken, that of writing to announce to Jacob his daughter's sentiments. Lizzie was anxious that he should not have it hanging over him, and by means of a little spurring from her, he was soon persuaded to set to work. The effect of his labour was as follows:—

MY DEAR SIR,

My daughter was so much agitated the other day at the sight of her father's distress that she was, I find, betrayed into giving with her lips a consent which never came from her heart, and which, therefore, neither she nor I can hold as

valid. She now, with my entire wish and concurrence withdraws that consent, and begs that you will never again ask for it. She feels more and more that the affection due from a wife to a husband, which alone can consecrate a marriage, is not hers to give. It is with the deepest regret that I make you this announcement, for believe me, Sir, there is no one whom, as a son-in-law, I should so much value as yourself. I can, however, only allow myself to hope that you may ere long find some one better calculated than I fear my daughter would have been to promote your happiness, of which allow me to hope, which I do most earnestly, that a large share may still be yours. You will, I am sure, be generous enough to wait a little for the payment of your debt, and I hope it may not be long ere I find means for that purpose. I am inclined to think my affairs may not be in so ruinous a condition after all, and with your permission, I will take the earliest opportunity of sailing for Jamaica, and seeing after them myself. If I can raise money in no other way, I still rely on getting a sufficient sum by the sale of my property to free myself of my heavy obligation to you, for which, believe me, I shall never cease to feel grateful; and I am, with the sincerest esteem,

Yours faithfully,

R. LINDSAY.

On finishing his epistle, Mr. Lindsay handed it over to his daughter for her approval. It was modified praise that the latter awarded it, for she fancied her father might have adopted a less humble style in addressing a man she secretly despised. However, Mr. Lindsay was decidedly opposed to her in this opinion and so the letter was sealed up and the two started with it to the post, our heroine having arranged in her own mind that, if she should spy in the distance

either Mrs. Birch or Rosa, she would make a speedy retreat.

"I think, papa," said Lizzie, as they were returning homewards, "I ought at once to see about some plan for earning a little money."

A deep sigh prefaced Mr. Lindsay's answer. "It will, I am afraid," he said, "be a positive necessity that both of us should now work for a livelihood. We cannot, though, at once give up our cottage, and I think you had better at all events remain there quietly with Rachel while I am away. Something may in the meanwhile turn up in the way of employment. It is unfortunate," and here was another sigh, "that we should neither of us have anything in the shape of an influential friend."

"But, papa," said Lizzie anxiously, "shall we ever be able to pay our rent?" That lightness of heart which had followed our heroine's emancipation from a galling chain, had hindered her from at once recognizing fully the difficulties of her position, and now these difficulties began to press upon her imagination with alarming force.

"To be candid with you," was Mr. Lindsay's mournful answer, "I feel in a state of utter uncertainty, and I know not how it may all end;" and here Lizzie fancied she could hear a suppressed sob. "Reports are often exaggerated," he went on a little more cheerfully, "and my one hope rests in the belief that it may be so with this. I fancy I should have heard myself from some quarter or other, had things

been as bad as they have been represented. I see I have about sixty pounds left, and that will at all events be sufficient to pay for my passage and for all necessary expenses which you may incur in my absence. Rachel will, I know, take good care of you while I am away, and I shall hope that better news may await my little girl on my return."

As Mr. Lindsay spoke he looked fondly on his daughter, and pressed her arm, which was resting on his, closely to his side. The look and the pressure were responded to, and Lizzie, who was always more ready to hope than to despond, again turned her attention solely to the bright side of the picture.

On her return home she communicated to Rachel the substance of her father's letter, the fears and anxieties which the writing of it had occasioned him, and the arrangement which since doing so had been planned by him.

"Depend upon it," was Rachel's reply, "thou wilt never have to repent of doing what was right. As to master's affairs he can't do better than go and look after them himself, and may-be he won't find them quite so bad as Jacob Birch would have him suppose. He's a cunning chap, is that young man, unless he's greatly changed from what he was. I believe myself that things will all come right again, and that thee wilt find there ain't much truth in the report. May-be Mr. Dyke was called away suddenly, and that that is the reason as master havn't heard from him. Don't thee be

afraid, Miss ; and, above all things, don't go and fancy as thee didst wrong in getting thy father to write that letter. You'll never have reason to be sorry, either of you, trust me for that : and as to the money you can't be in actual want of it just now. For the matter too of that, I've got a few pounds myself, and thee and master shall, if necessary be welcome to the loan of them until such time as he can make it convenient to repay me."

The faithful servant had in her young mistress a willing and an attentive listener, as she uttered these reassuring and comforting words, and eagerly did our heroine cling to the hope that some sudden domestic calamity might have been the cause of their receiving from Mr. Dyke no remittances by the last mail. Mr. Lindsay had a good deal persuaded himself into the same belief ; for like most proud, and at the same time kindly-natured men, he was unwilling to surrender his faith in the person he had once trusted. It was, nevertheless, an anxious time with both of them, and Jacob's answer to Mr. Lindsay's letter was expected by the latter with a nervous kind of dread. Though believing implicitly in the kindly nature of his correspondent, he nevertheless knew well how bitterly any man would be mortified at an announcement so blighting to his most cherished hopes, and he wondered whether the rejected lover would be disposed to charge him with ingratitude for having so decidedly seconded his daughter's resolution.

Slowly as the hours passed, the last day of the week at length came round, and it was with a breathless earnestness that Mr. Lindsay caught hold of the two letters which Rachel placed beside him. Both promised to be of equal interest to the anxious recipient of them. One was a foreign one, bearing the Jamaica post-mark, but the writer had inadvertently directed it to a wrong county. It had, in consequence, been lying in another Fairford post-office during the last four days, waiting to be claimed. The post-town was never mentioned in the address, and it at last struck the officials that, as there was no Beauchamp cottage to be heard of in that neighbourhood, the letter might probably be intended for some occupant of the Huntingdownshire village.

The other letter was, as our readers will guess, from Jacob Birch. If it had been possible Mr. Lindsay would have read them both at the same time, but as he could not do that he gave the preference to the West Indian one. It was written by a friend of Mr. Lindsay's, and confirmed, alas ! the worst intelligence which the lawyer's correspondent had communicated to him.

A cold perspiration damped the poor man's forehead, which Lizzie assiduously wiped away as she leant over him and tried to breathe comfort into his soul with her looks of affection.

Jacob's letter had now to be opened, though Mr. Lindsay's trembling fingers almost refused to perform the office. The task having been at last accomplished, we will with Lizzie

look over her father's shoulder, and see what Jacob had to say. His letter was as follows :—

SIR,

It is, I should suppose, unnecessary that I should tell you how much surprise and indignation your strange epistle has occasioned me. That you should for months and months have evidently favoured my suit merely to turn round at last and coolly to tell me not only that you sanction your daughter's breach of faith, but that you actually wish her to take so unpardonable a step—conduct such as this seems to me so flagrantly dishonourable that I can really find no excuse for it. You talk of my generosity—let me tell you, sir, that a deceived and slighted man is seldom generous. I have your written assurance that you will discharge your debt to me on Friday next, the sixth of May. Should the full amount not be forthcoming on that day, you will at once be arrested. My purpose will remain irrevocable unless you should, by exercising that authority which a father ought always to possess, induce your daughter to repent of the decision which she has (apparently under parental influence) come to.

I am, Sir, your's, &c.,

JACOB BIRCH.

The perspiration which had at first merely damped Mr. Lindsay's forehead now fell from it in great drops. Again he leant back in his chair—again he gave his daughter that look of helpless misery to remove which she felt impelled to make any sacrifice. Lizzie felt indeed like a culprit—like one who had grievously sinned against a parent, and her own sense of misery now quite overwhelmed her, and took from her the power of speech. The blank silence which

the perusal of the two letters had produced did not however last long, and it was Rachel who interrupted it. Claiming the privilege of an old servant, and with that familiarity which the one domestic of a household so frequently claims, the kind-hearted woman had lingered at the door while the two letters were being read. She had quickly discerned that they had both brought trouble to the recipient of them, and her feelings now impelled her to act on this conclusion. With a diffident, hesitating step and manner she came forward.

“Miss Lizzie,” she said in the low tone of nervous agitation, “don’t thee vex, and don’t let thy father vex either. If it’s the debt as makes master take on so, I think—I am sure as I shall be able to find money enough to pay it. I’ll help you both in any way I can, if thee’lt only tell me how.”

“It *is* the debt,” sobbed Lizzie, “and it’s all true about Mr. Dyke besides.”

“But young Birch don’t expect the debt to be paid at once, do he?” inquired Rachel anxiously.

“Yes, at once—at least no later than next Friday.”

“Well,” said Rachel assuming some of her wonted confidence, as Lizzie’s large eyes, swimming in tears, looked imploringly to her for help, “Well, Miss Lizzie, trust me, I’ll get that base young fellow’s money paid him before next Friday, and if master should find as there’s nothing left of

his property, there's many as are no better off than he, and yet who make their way somehow. It'll be hard if we can't find a maintenance some way or other, but vexing will never bring it, so don't thee fret—that's a dear—and don't let master take on so either."

Mr. Lindsay had sunk back into his chair, and with one of his capacious palms pressed against his forehead, nothing was discernible but the deathly palor of the lower part of his face.

"Papa," said Lizzie, taking her father's disengaged hand and pressing it to her lips, "Papa, you hear what Rachel says. I am sure I could be happy on a crust of bread if you would only let me think that I could make you so. It is I—I know—who have caused you this fresh trouble——" and the poor girl began to sob violently.

Mr. Lindsay could not resist this last appeal. Slowly he raised his head from his hand—looked fondly, though sadly into his daughter's face, roused himself from his reclining position, and as Lizzie put her face to his he gave her a kiss. Then with a smile that was meant to be a cheerful one, "The crust of bread would do for me, Lizzie," he said, "though I should wish still to provide something better for yourself. It is this debt that chiefly distresses me—the debt which I think I heard our good friend Rachel so generously offer to pay for us."

Mr. Lindsay's emotion hindered him for a time from going

on speaking, and Rachel had, in consequence, an opportunity of putting in a few words. “Thee must please not to distress thyself about the debt,” she said. “It shall be paid, and I don’t think as any-one will be much hurt by the payment of it. Thee’llt excuse me, sir, for venturing on giving thee advice—but if I might speak I would say as ’twould be as well for thee now to forget all about the debt, and to think only how we may best manage to make a living between us.”

“It is what we must most surely do,” was the mournfully sighing answer, “and the sooner we set about it the better. Rachel, I will accept your noble offer, if I can raise the money in no other way; but in accepting it my chief aim will be to repay you eventually, though it should be at the sacrifice of every personal comfort.”

Rachel made no reply but quietly left the room, carrying the breakfast-tray along with her, and mentally resolving as she went that her master and young mistress should undergo no hardships that she could be instrumental in saving them from.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRUGGLES AND TRIALS OF DISTRESS.

As soon as the father and daughter were left alone the former, after having commented warmly on the generosity of feeling which his domestic had evinced, again opened his West Indian letter and commenced its re-perusal.

"I cannot bear," he said at last, "to take from Rachel what is most probably her little all without having a sort of certainty that I shall soon be able to repay her. I think I will go and have a talk with Barter. He may, at all events, give me an opinion as to whether there is a chance of my property fetching anything. If I could get Barter to advance me the sum I need on the certainty of its being refunded on the sale of my property, I should prefer this arrangement to that of borrowing from Rachel. Barter might possibly at the same time help me to a clerkship, out of which we might at all events manage to make a living."

On saying this Mr. Lindsay rose and prepared himself for his intended visit.

“I will go with you,” said Lizzie, a bright flush colouring her cheek.

“I think you had better not,” was the reply. “It will be a very painful visit, and I am sure it will be best, on every account, that I should pay it alone.”

“*Do* let me go,” said our heroine pleadingly. “I can have a talk with Mrs. Barter while you are with her husband. I won’t detain you a minute,” and Lizzie ran upstairs to put on her bonnet.

As the two approached the attorney’s house, Rosa Birch passed them on the other side of the street. She at once made up her mind to give the two a decided cut, hoping that, by so doing, she would bring mortification to the heart of one at all events, if not to both. The cut failed entirely of its intended effect, for our heroine felt positively relieved on finding that there was no salutation to be returned.

Mrs. Birch had been wondering that Lizzie had not returned her visit, and had it not been for her daughter’s pertinacious resistance of any such intention on her part, she would a second time have called at Beauchamp Cottage. That morning, however, she had received a letter from her son announcing his intention of giving up the engagement for a time. Mr. Lindsay’s affairs were, he said, in such a disordered state that he might be incurring alarming

responsibilities by allying himself at present too closely with him. He hinted that it was probable Lindsay might be wanting to raise money, and he thought that it would, in consequence, be only fair to Barter to give him a caution on the subject. He knew it to be utterly impossible that so bankrupt a man could ever repay any debt he might incur. He trusted that his mother and sister had both attended to his especial wishes by keeping his engagement an entire secret, and to this last observation each felt that she might make a satisfactory reply.

The information contained in her brother's letter aroused in Rosa's mind an unwonted sense of duty. She believed she ought to lose no time in cautioning Mr. Barter against so undesirable a hanger-on as Mr. Lindsay might prove himself to be. So well did she perform the mission she had given herself that, when her early visitor left, the attorney's wife gave it as her opinion that the safest plan would be to shut their door altogether against the Lindsays. Her husband thought, however, that such a proceeding would be hardly justifiable, and that, so well warned as they had been by their considerate young friend, they would incur no kind of danger in coming into contact with Mr. Lindsay or his daughter either, paupers though they were. Mrs. Barter's fears began to subside after this expression of her husband's sentiments ; and so, though she saw the couple approach from her drawing-room window, and expected that their visit

would be no other than a begging one, she nevertheless put no veto on their admission. Soon Hannah, the parlour-maid, made her appearance, bringing with her the following message—

“Mr. Lindsay do wish to know whether master can see him for a few minutes; and Miss Lindsay says, ma’am, as she’d be glad if she could sit with you in the meanwhile.”

“They had better *both* be shown up here, hadn’t they, my dear,” said Mrs. Barter, fearing lest in a moment of weakness her husband might be betrayed into making some rash promise.

“Decidedly not,” said Mr. Barter. “If this should prove, as I suspect it will, a begging visit, I must give Lindsay a piece of my mind, and it will be desirable that I should have him alone for that purpose.”

Her husband’s sternness and decision of manner quite reassured Mrs. Barter, who told Hannah in a slightly disdainful manner, that she might show the young lady upstairs, while her husband went down to confront Mr. Lindsay. So cold and distant was however the demeanour of the attorney’s wife as Lizzie entered the room, that the intention which the latter had entertained of asking her if she could help her to find employment vanished at once, and our heroine found herself to be sitting on thorns throughout her visit.

Mr. Barter was a hard, though an honest man of business.

Being prosperous himself he never could conceive that people could be the reverse save from some fault of their own. The Birch family was a thriving, and therefore in his opinion a most respectable one. Rosa had read to him a portion of her brother's letter, and the censure of such a man as Jacob, one who promised in time to become the most flourishing lawyer in all the country round—censure coming from such a source amounted in Barter's estimate to nothing short of utter condemnation. The attorney could hardly have brought himself to be affable with the poor bankrupt even if he had tried, and, when the latter spoke of his troubles, the feelings of his auditor went entirely with Jacob, who had in his opinion been plundered by an unprincipled adventurer. Mr. Lindsay spoke in touching terms of the calamity that had fallen upon him, but he got nothing in reply, save a short dry cough. He asked Mr. Barter to read his friend's letter, and inquired at the same time whether the lawyer thought it possible that he could at once raise three hundred pounds, on the certainty of the sum being refunded when the property was sold. There was a good deal of cold suspicion in Mr. Barter's manner as he took the letter. Rosa's assertions and her words of warning had done their work. He glanced hurriedly through it, exclaiming as he did so, "Why, Lindsay, that property of yours is not worth a farthing ! How can you imagine that any-one in their senses would advance you money on so utterly foundationless a security ?"

Mr. Barter's last words, and the tone and manner in which he uttered them were enough for Mr. Lindsay. He was new to the trade of begging, and he would have had his tongue cut out sooner than he would have asked a favour of the attorney now. Rising from his seat,

"I am sorry," he said, "to have taken up so much of your time. May I ask you what is your charge for the amount of that which you have bestowed upon me?"

"Oh," said Mr. Barter in a tone of lofty indifference, "never mind about the fee. You won't, of course, think it necessary to pay me another visit."

"Certainly not, sir," said Mr. Lindsay in a haughtier tone than was habitual to him. "I should under no circumstances ask counsel of you again, but I insist on paying for the few brief words you have favoured me with," and he placed half-a-sovereign on the lawyer's desk. "May I ask you," he went on, "to let Miss Lindsay know that I am waiting for her, and perhaps," he added, with formal politeness, "you will inform Mrs. Barter how much I regret that my daughter should have occasioned her any trouble by so early a visit. "Oh, don't mention it, pray," said the lawyer now beginning to look and feel confused. Mr. Lindsay's proud self-respect was leading Mr. Barter to wonder a little whether his suspicions were altogether just, but then it was on such indubitable authority that they had arisen that they were not so easily thrown aside. Mr. Barter had been thoroughly initiated into the

wiles and artifices of rogues. Might not this ostentatious determination on the part of a bankrupt man to give him his half-sovereign be in reality merely a ruse adopted for the purpose of winning the lawyer's confidence, and of getting from him hundreds in return ?

This last idea induced Mr. Barter still to maintain his frigid demeanour, and, ringing for Hannah, he desired her to give Miss Lindsay her father's message. He then went himself towards the door with the action of a man impatient for the departure of his visitor, and he had not long to wait. Hannah's appearance caused Lizzie to rise in an instant from her seat. There were no fond words at parting, and, though Mr. Lindsay was all eagerness to be off, he could not possibly have accused his daughter of trying his patience by her tardy appearance.

On rejoining her father Lizzie at once perceived by his countenance how bitterly his pride had been wounded ; and as she leant on his arm, which seemed but a frail support to her, she felt as if her own heart were swelling almost to bursting, while, side by side, they pursued their homeward path.

“ What advice did Mr. Barter give you ? ” she at last inquired, dreading as she did so the answer she might receive.

“ Advice ! ” exclaimed the latter bitterly ; “ it was not advice that I got, but contemptuous words instead. My misfortunes have, it seems, brought with them the usual attendants in the shape of cold words and suspicious looks.”

Nothing further passed between Mr. Lindsay and his daughter, grief disposing them to be silent; but they were each, while drinking their own bitter cup of sorrow, thinking how best they might sweeten it to the other.

Rachel had hardly expected them back so soon, but, hearing her master's step in the hall, she listened for the sound of Lizzie's lighter one as it ascended the stairs, and at once she put aside the work in which she was employed, and followed her young mistress into her room. Lizzie turned round and in doing so she could not but observe the eager interest and friendly sympathy displayed by the domestic, contrasting as it did so forcibly with Mrs. Barter's cold and distant demeanour, as well as with the attorney's contemptuous tone and words as they had been described to her by her father.

The poor girl's nervous system had got so low that Rachel's look of pitying tenderness was too much for her. She was overcome by it quite; the room seemed to be swimming round her, and she would in a moment have been on the floor, had it not been for the timely support of this true-hearted friend.

With her usual quietness Rachel at last succeeded in bringing her young mistress round, while Mr. Lindsay remained in happy ignorance of his daughter's condition.

On entering the parlour our heroine found her father reclining in his chair, and looking the picture of desponding misery. Lizzie seated herself beside him, and took one of

his hands. The poor man recognised the attention by a pressure of hers and with a piteous smile attending it. Neither spoke till the dull silence was interrupted by Rachel's appearance, as she commenced preparations for dinner.

"Couldst thee, Miss Lizzie," she inquired, "make it convenient to spare me this afternoon? I should like to walk over to Stowe to see my sister, and as it is a long way to go, I ought to start early."

Stowe was some miles off, and Rachel's sister lived with the clergyman's family there.

"Oh, go by all means," said our heroine, catching eagerly at the little bit of pleasure which the gratification of Rachel's wishes was still able to afford her.

"Then I'll put the tea-things all ready, and I think I'd better be off by a little after three."

"Or sooner, Rachel, if you please. I can manage to clear away the things."

"I can't well be off before the time I mention," said Rachel with the air of one who, having formed her plans, meant to abide by them. "I'm sorry," she added, "that I've got nothing but a cold dinner for master, but I've been very busy all the morning and haven't had time for cooking."

Mr. Lindsay was too much sunk in the contemplation of his own perplexities to take any part in the conversation; and he only spoke when, as the cold joint went away almost

untouched, Rachel began loudly to reproach herself for having provided her master with so comfortless a repast.

“The repast is good enough,” he observed. “It is only the will to eat that is wanting ; and indeed, beggar as I am, I doubt whether food like this may not already be too sumptuous for me.”

“Don’t thee go for to vex poor Miss Lizzie by talking so,” said the outspoken domestic. “Let us enjoy good food while we can, and thank God for it. It’ll be time enough to speak of going without, when we’ve no longer the means of getting it.”

Mr. Lindsay was a little taken aback at having advice a second time so coolly proffered to him by his servant. We believe though, that Rachel’s were words in season—at all events there was a better inclination shown by her master for the comfortable tea which our heroine found a pleasure in preparing for him, whether springing from a determination on his part to adopt good counsel, or from that gradual indifference which a longer experience of trouble does sometimes bring with it, or from both causes combined, we cannot precisely determine.

CHAPTER IX.

NINE o'clock had already struck when, with something like satisfaction on her features, Rachel entered the little sitting-room to announce her return.

"Did you find your sister well?" was Lizzie's first inquiry.

"Quite well, thanks to thee, and very comfortable and happy in her situation. They are really nice people as she's with. I had a long conversation with Mrs. Elliott, and I hope as master will excuse me"—and here Rachel made a deprecatory curtsey—"but I ventured to speak to her a little about his circumstances. She seemed very sorry for you both, and she wished, she said, as she could do something for you. She asked, Miss Lizzie, if thee would'st think it a liberty if she called. 'Not at all,' says I; 'Miss Lizzie ain't one as can ever take kindness amiss.' 'Let me see,' says

she, ‘we shall be going out on Monday till the end of the week, and perhaps it’ll be just as well if I don’t come before then, for I can inquire meanwhiles, and see if I can hear of any employment for the young lady, such as she’ll like to undertake.’ I thanked her heartily for thee, Miss Lizzie, and for myself too, and Sarah tells me that her Missis ain’t one of those that promise without performing. Trust me, Miss Lizzie we’ll find friends enough in time, and it ain’t of no use for thee or master either to be too much cast down.”

Lizzie looked at her father to see whether his countenance betokened assent to Rachel’s last words. Two large tears were in the act of falling on his cheeks, but they were not tears of sorrow. The faithful servant’s devotion to his own and his daughter’s interests had touched the poor man’s heart.

“Rachel,” he said, “you are truly a good and a noble hearted woman, though I should, I fear, never have discovered your real value if these troubles had not come upon me. I deeply regret that I should only have learnt to know it fully now that I have no longer the means of recompensing your fidelity.”

“Don’t talk of recompense, sir,” said Rachel, “it’s a word one never likes to hear when one is doing what one can to help a friend”—and she disappeared before her master had time to make any further observation.

Sunday came round, and with it the usual church services.

The Lindsay's pew was close behind that of the attorney, and as Mr. Barter, with his loud and sanctimonious voice, was praying for deliverance from all pride and hardness of heart ; the question might naturally have occurred to his less prosperous neighbour, whether this did indeed constitute a part of vital religion—whether it did not rather resemble the vain repetition of the Pharisees which Christ so much condemned.

The rector and his wife were from home on rather a long visit, and Mr. Webb had got a neighbouring clergyman to help his curate through the three services which a Sunday at Fairford brought with it. If there was any real devotion in Mr. Callow's heart it did not betray itself in his manner ; and while he was ponderously getting through what he found, as others might well have supposed, the drudgery of the service, the words he uttered failed to kindle in the hearts of at least two of his hearers one spark of heart-cheering devotion.

Tedious as Mr. Lindsay and his daughter found the service on this occasion, the latter was hardly eager for its close. The phantom of Jacob Birch was continually present to her mind, and she dreaded the thought of meeting him at the church-yard gate. Her own silent prayer, when the public service was at an end, seemed on this occasion to be of a most unusual length. Her dress also appeared to have got much out of order, judging from the time she took to re-arrange it. Then she had to go through the

ceremony of finding and carefully fastening her parasol, only to unfasten it when a dazzling May sun should again meet her glance.

Jacob had, in fact, been a member of the congregation. He too had lingered, but Lizzie's protracted movements had either tired his patience or else quite extinguished his hopes, and so he was, with his mother and sister, fairly out of sight before our heroine and her father had reached the road.

Monday morning came, and at nine o'clock Rachel might have been seen posted at the little back-gate of the garden, as she eagerly looked out for the postman. Full half-an-hour she had to wait, and when at last he did appear he brought no letter for the cottage. There was a look of disappointment on Rachel's face as he announced to her the fact, but it soon passed away and she went about her work as usual.

The reception which Lizzie had met with at the Barters' made her feel very shy of putting her troubles before anyone else, and yet she felt she ought to make a decided effort towards getting something to do. She spoke to her father on the subject, but the heart of the latter naturally shrank from the thought of allowing his daughter to encounter further rebuffs. She was his cherished child to protect whom he could 'almost have chid the wind for visiting her face too roughly.' He gave it therefore as decidedly his opinion that she had better wait a little.

"Let us, my love," he said, "first see whether this Mrs.

Elliott can do anything for you. I hope I may have it in my power to go to Jamaica very shortly, as I am anxious to see what I can still gather out of the wreck of my fortune. I should be better satisfied if I thought you could remain here quietly while I am away."

Her father's proposal was so entirely in accordance with our heroine's feelings that she acceded to it at once. However, she thought it desirable that she should ask Rachel whether she knew of anyone likely to be wanting work done of any kind, to which question the latter replied, with something of unwillingness in her tone, that she might perhaps have an opportunity of inquiring in the course of a day or two. However, though she went into the village that same evening, she had no announcement to make her mistress on her return.

Tuesday morning again saw her posted at the little side gate. "No letters," the postman shouted as he passed her. Disappointment on this occasion was marked in more legible characters on Rachel's brow, neither were the traces of it so speedily erased. However hope was still latent within ; and, when she entered the sitting-room for the purpose of removing the breakfast things, neither her master nor her mistress suspected from her appearance that there was anything like anxiety at her heart.

In the evening she found occasion to call at the Rectory, and when there she inquired of her friend, the housemaid,

as if accidentally, whether her mistress were likely to want any sewing done. She knew, she added, a young person who could work beautifully, and whom it would be a great charity to employ.

“Missis ain’t, you know, at home at present, and we don’t expect her home afore next Saturday,” was Mary’s reply. “I’ll just put the question to her if you like on her return ; but she have for years given her work to Sally Brett, the lame woman.”

On Wednesday morning Rachel was so anxious for the appearance of the postman that at nine o’clock she might have been seen walking along the road leading to the village, with a basket on her arm as if going on an errand, and she met John Trotter in consequence about a quarter of a mile from home.

“Any letters for us?” she inquired almost breathlessly. Rachel’s calm demeanour seemed to be forsaking her.

“None,” was the reply ; and now for the first time Rachel’s heart sunk within her.

Betty Sim’s cottage was close at hand. She called there to inquire if the old woman had any eggs to sell, bought half-a-dozen, and then walked hurriedly back. There were marks of tears on her naturally calm features as she re-entered her own little domain ; however, she carefully wiped them away as she heard the sound of the parlour bell.

“Miss Lizzie,” she said in a faltering tone, as her young mistress entered the kitchen shortly afterwards, “what day—I mean the latest—will thy father be wanting that three hundred pounds?”

“I don’t exactly know,” said our heroine with a slight feeling of tremour; “but I will go and inquire.”

She did so.

“Has Rachel, do you suppose, any doubt about getting it?” inquired Mr. Lindsay anxiously.

“I don’t know, papa,” and a little sob betrayed our heroine’s own latent fears.

The sob was responded to by one of her father’s deepest sighs as he thus replied to her question—

“I ought certainly to receive it to-morrow. Friday would be too late, for Birch must have the money on that day, and I have been thinking it would be best for me to go myself and give it into his hands. Friday is, you know, the day for the coach, which starts just before the post arrives.”

This information was at once taken to Rachel who had assumed the appearance of a person resolved still on hoping even though it were against hope; and our heroine at once determined on doing the same.

Hope was, however, no longer a very vital principle in the heart of the faithful attendant, and Lizzie would have known as much, had she, on the following morning, seen the poor woman leaning over the little gate, in the piteous

attitude of one whose anxiety was just bordering on despair.

“No letters!” the postman again shouted.

Rachel raised her hands to her forehead, held tight her throbbing temples, and cried and sobbed as she had seldom done before. There was no longer an endeavour on her part to conceal her trouble.

“I have been too confident,” the poor woman said.
“Fifteen pounds is all I have of my own.”

Rachel’s calmness and trustfulness had altogether broken down, and a feeling of hopeless, helpless misery pervaded the household.

CHAPTER X.

LETTERS OF IMPORTANCE.

WE must, for the present, put aside the Lindsays and their troubles, and return to our hero, who, it will be remembered, was at the time when we left him by no means in a happy frame of mind. As it seemed evident that his engagement was not a second time to be broken off, he had been doing his best to fix his attention on the sunny side of the prospect that lay before him, if, indeed, he could find such to exist. But alas ! the sunshine of the future had all disappeared. Emily's loveliness had, to the young man's imagination, lost its one most precious charm. It had once been to him as the outward expression of those finer feelings of the soul which, while shedding around beauty the halo of divinity, make it worthy of the homage it receives. Those bright imaginings were gone, and with them our hero's

rapturous devotion had quickly vanished too. It was a cold kind of selfishness, rather than the generous promptings of love, which he now recognised as the force most paramount in the heart of his betrothed. Was it disloyalty on the young man's part, the harbouring of such a belief? Truly it was a forced entrance which the traitorous inmate had obtained, and gladly would our hero have divested himself, had it been possible, of so comfortless and disquieting a guest.

It was on a Saturday that the young Baronet left town, and on the following Monday he and Mr. Seymour started on their Welsh tour. During the short time he was at home Mr. Maxwell lost no opportunity of putting before the young Baronet the necessity he would be under of practising the strictest economy as soon as his married life commenced. He even went so far as to hint that he ought to find the rent paid for the old place sufficient income for the present, seeing that so many thousands would be required for the disencumbering of the property. The widower was one who held strongly to the doctrine that if a man nominally possessed an estate it had better be his in reality; and this doctrine he seemed very eager now to impress upon the young man. Our hero was so far inclined to adopt his friend's views that, on writing to Emily previously to his departure, he mentioned them to her, giving her at the same time to understand that he felt much disposed to act in a measure upon them.

Emily's letter in reply commenced with a plaintive and earnest depreciation of any such intention. She then expressed her own firm belief in the generous nature of her betrothed, which would, as she felt assured, hinder him from ever putting such niggardly theories into practice. Many high-flown terms of affection were bestowed by her upon her correspondent and she ended her epistle with an earnest entreaty that he would quickly write again.

Small comfort did our hero derive from the perusal of his cousin's letter. In fact it merely served to prove to him yet more clearly how altogether incompatible with Emily's notions of happiness would be the quiet, unostentatious way of living which he should feel bound to adopt. He felt in his heart almost disposed to curse the hour when her beauty had first enslaved him.

Believing, nevertheless, that honour compelled him to act towards Emily as if he loved her still, he at once complied with her request as regarded writing. He at the same time wrote with candour respecting his future intentions, and he would for a third time have offered to make the beauty free, were it not that he dreaded the irritating accusations which such a proposal might again have provoked.

When last Mr. Maxwell had heard from our hero he had been requested to forward to the post-office at Aberystwith all letters addressed to the young Baronet.

It was on the first Wednesday in the month of May that

he and his friend arrived there. The post-office was closed on their arrival and they could not, in consequence, claim their letters till the following morning. There were several awaiting the Baronet ; the first he opened was one addressed to him by Mr. Maxwell. It contained very unexpected and very pleasant news, or rather the letter enclosed in it was the bearer of such. It was addressed by Lord Worthington to his older acquaintance, though its contents were chiefly of importance to our hero.

That nobleman alluded, in the first place, to the high public office which he had just been called upon to fill, and he then expressed the hope that Sir Thomas was still free, and that he would be willing to occupy the position of private secretary to his Lordship, with a salary of four hundred pounds a year.

It was with a flush of pleasure that Tom read of the good fortune that awaited him, though he was hardly aware of the high social advantages which he would gain by this rise in his circumstances. It simply gave him the idea of honourable employment with an income which, in his present embarrassed circumstances, seemed to him like positive wealth.

Emily's letter was next opened. She had as usual filled it with conventional phrases of affection, phrases which our hero's happy feelings at the moment caused him, however, to dwell upon with something like pleasure.

Mr. Seymour having got through his own correspondence,

Tom put into his hand his Lordship's epistle and then betook himself to an examination of the other two letters that fell to his share. One he recognized as coming from a college friend, but the other was in a hand altogether strange to him to whom it was addressed, and it underwent, in consequence, a scrutinising examination. It had on it the Stowe post mark, and soon Tom perceived in a corner the word "Immediate," a word which the second direction had rendered at first unnoticeable. It was at once opened and read, and the contents were evidently of so absorbing a character that Mr. Seymour would not venture on interrupting his friend by one word of congratulation.

They were as follows:—

TO SIR THOMAS MARCHMONT—

Who will, I know, excuse the liberty I take in addressing him. Perhaps thee wilt not have altogether forgotten Rachel, she as used to live with that worthy gentleman as was so good a friend to both her and thee. As to Miss Lizzie there's no need to remind thee of her, because I know that thee hast met her recently. Well, sir, that young lady and her father too are at present in the greatest distress. Master's agent has proved false and he (that is master) is an utterly ruined man. But, sir, this ain't the worst. He has, to his misfortune, got into debt to Mr. Birch. Thee wilt know who I mean—Jacob, as was formerly so much with his aunts. Master (that is, Mr. Lindsay) has got into debt to him to the sum of three hundred pounds. Jacob declares if it ain't paid by next Friday nothing shall hinder him from putting master into jail. Please, sir, look with pity on his distress and on that

of my poor young mistress. Though fortune has placed thee a good way above her, yet I'll never believe as thee wilt refuse to help her, and in this assurance

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

RACHEL WALL.

Please direct James Lindsay, Beauchamp Cottage, Fairford; and an immediate answer is urgently requested.

No sooner had our hero read the above than he said to his companion in an eager, flurried manner,

“ Seymour, I am sorry to say I shall have to leave you at once; but I know you will yourself wish me to go when I tell you that my not doing so would entail the most calamitous consequences on the oldest, and the dearest friend I have.”

He spoke with a warmth and an emotion which startled his friend, and which made the latter almost as eager for his departure as Tom was himself.

There was no public conveyance at hand so our hero was obliged to have recourse to posters, and with their help he arrived at Camm at about seven o'clock that same night, not without having considerably emptied his purse before reaching the place of his destination.

Mr. Jenkins was not in his office, and the lawyer's house lay a little out of the town. Tom was not long in reaching it, and he then sent up a message to say he wished to speak to Mr. Jenkins on urgent private business.

This message a little staggered the lawyer who had

supposed Tom to be quietly roaming among the Welch mountains ; or else eating his dinner at some primitive inn in the midst of those wild regions. His client had not, however, long to wait ere he appeared.

Our hero's features manifested breathless haste and anxious eagerness. These portents looked unfavourable ; and when Tom, before almost he had allowed himself time to give the lawyer a word of salutation, informed him that he had immediate need of three hundred pounds, Mr. Jenkins rubbed his hands, and himself looked anxious. Prudence was by the lawyer ranked very high on the list of the social virtues, all the more so, perhaps, from his having found it so rare a one among young men coming unexpectedly into property.

He hummed and hawed and then inquired,

“ How soon do you require that sum ? ”

“ At once,” said Tom peremptorily. “ To morrow morning at the very latest.”

“ I have not myself money in hand to that amount,” observed Mr. Jenkins ; “ but if you must have it immediately, I daresay they will lend it to you at the bank.”

“ You have no doubt that they will ? ” said Tom in an earnest impetuous tone.

“ I think I may say,” was the reply, “ that there is no doubt about it. You will, of course, have to pay interest for the money.”

"Oh, of course," said our hero carelessly. "And now," he added, "there is another thing that I wish to speak to you about. I want to raise, as quickly as possible, the sum of three thousand pounds."

"The sum of three thousand pounds!" exclaimed Mr. Jenkins in a tone of sharp remonstrance.

This fresh and apparently unconscionable demand startled the lawyer out of his usually courteous demeanour.

"Yes," said Tom resolutely, "and I must and will have it, even though I mortgage my whole estate for that purpose."

Mr. Jenkins was, for a moment or two, silent from utter astonishment.

"May I ask you, sir," he said at last, "if Mr. Maxwell is aware of this intention on your part?"

"No, he is not," replied Tom, evidently by no means abashed at having to answer in the negative this cautious question on the part of the man of business. "By the bye," he added, "when does the post-office close?"

"At ten o'clock," said Mr. Jenkins after a pause.

Our hero's extortionate demands had fairly taken his breath away, while the cool way in which he confessed to not having taken Mr. Maxwell into his counsels convinced the lawyer that his client's future career would be one of barefaced and reckless extravagance.

"I must then write a letter at once," Tom went on; "or

stay—I think it would be best if you were to do so for me."

"Write for you!" exclaimed Mr. Jenkins, in a tone that sounded very much like one of anger at the proposal, and which betokened a resolute intention on the solicitor's part to resist, if possible, his client's extravagant demands.

"I should be very much obliged to you if you would," said our hero pleadingly. He had observed this disinclination on the part of his man of business to comply with his wishes. "But I must explain things to you first," he went on. "The son-in-law of my earliest friend will, I am told, be seized for debt to-morrow if —— but read this note, it will explain things to you better than I can."

Mr. Jenkins at once and readily obeyed Tom's behest. Having done so,

"I think," he said, "I can understand things a little better now, but you took me by surprise at first. You want the three hundred pounds to liquidate the debt incurred by Mr. Lindsay to Birch."

"I do," said Tom.

"But why is it, may I ask, that you are in such immediate haste for that larger sum you speak about?"

"Why, to keep the grand-daughter of one of my greatest benefactors above want for the remainder of her days."

"It is a liberal idea on your part," was Mr. Jenkin's caution implying answer. "So liberal indeed, that it might by some people be termed quixotic,"

“Quixotic or not,” said Tom resolutely, “it is what I intend to do, and nothing shall deter me from my purpose. I should wish though, the giver of it to be unknown, and that is why I wished you to write.”

“And do you think you are justified in making so large a sacrifice without first consulting the mother of your future wife.”

“I consider that I am,” was Tom’s decided answer. “I have given my cousin no hope of marrying anything better than a poor man in allying herself to me; and three thousand pounds in addition to the present heavy mortgages cannot make very much actual difference in our prospects. Indeed, in spite of this fresh tax upon the estate, I am likely to have at once a better income than Lady Marchmont had any reason to suppose would be mine. I have this morning had the offer of a secretaryship with a salary of four hundred pounds a year.”

Mr. Jenkins was never for doing anything in a hurry.

“I think,” he said, “that the payment of the debt will be an affair very easily transacted. Do you wish me to write to Mr. Birch on the subject?”

“To him and to Mr. Lindsay, if you don’t object. Will you say to the latter that a friend who wishes to be unknown will cancel Mr. Birch’s debt, and mention at the same time the sum of money that will be placed in Miss Lindsay’s hands as soon as it can conveniently be raised.”

"I would rather," said the lawer, "that you first consulted Mr. Maxwell on that point."

"But that is what I positively decline doing," said our hero impatiently. "It might seem like a hint to him to come forward and help me. If you refuse to write for me I must myself make Miss Lindsay aware of my intentions, though I should infinitely rather that she received the information from you."

"Well, sir, if you have quite made up your mind, I can of course have no objection to being your amanuensis in the way of announcing to Miss Lindsay your intentions," and the lawyer, at Tom's dictation, sate down and wrote as he was required.

"How can I get the money conveyed to Birch?" our hero next inquired.

"I will be the bearer of it myself to morrow morning," was the reply.

"And it is sure to go all right?"

"You may depend upon that."

"Then I think I may as well sleep at Maplewood as here; though Mr. Maxwell will, by the bye, be a little startled at seeing me."

"So startled," said the lawyer smiling, "that I think you will at once have to make a clean breast of it."

"I expect I shall; however, I can tell him that you will find no difficulty in raising the sum required."

“I beg your pardon, sir. It is not so very easy to raise three thousand pounds on reasonable interest at a moment's notice.”

“Well, you have undertaken to raise it somehow, and I am very much obliged to you,” and Tom warmly pressed the lawyer's hand.

“Remember,” said the latter, as he cordially returned the pressure, “I would much have preferred your consulting your friend before committing yourself to such an extent.”

“That shall be all fully explained,” was the reply, “and I have no doubt that Mr. Maxwell will be ready and willing to forgive us both.”

Mr. Maxwell was in truth startled at seeing Tom, and as Mr. Jenkins so evidently considered our hero's resolution an extravagant if not an unjustifiable one, the latter a little expected it might win for him a few hard words from his friend. He found himself, however, agreeably mistaken.

Mr. Maxwell went heart and soul with him in his determination; and, to make matters altogether smooth, he himself proposed at once lending Tom the three thousand pounds for which he would be satisfied to receive three per cent. in the way of interest.

“Three per cent—that will be ninety pounds a year,” observed our hero, as he calculated aloud. “Not much for two people to live on after all.”

"Well, then, to satisfy you I will send them myself another thousand ; and so they will have two unknown friends instead of one."

The ray of pleasure that lighted up Tom's face, it was pleasant to the old man to witness, as the latter murmured with emotion,

"But, sir, you are too generous."

"Not at all," was the reply. "I was a little debating whether I ought not to give you something in the shape of a wedding present ; and now I have decided on making over my gift to your friend instead."

"And I am sure," said the young man with warmth, "I would infinitely rather that it went to her than to me."

"I know you would, Tom ; for I can safely say of you that you are as generous-hearted a fellow as ever breathed !"

Our hero had of late found the widower singularly uncomplimentary in his remarks ; and now so very warm an eulogy took the object of it a little by surprise. However, he received it silently, though thinking inwardly as he did so that he knew at least one man in the world who was more generous than himself.

After the first flush of happiness was over at having had the means afforded him of so materially assisting the one woman he loved, Tom's state of mind became more uncomfortable than ever. There seemed to be nothing now to interfere with the wish he had so strongly felt when he had

last seen Lizzie—to bind her destiny to his—save the unfortunate fact of his being himself bound to another.

What changes may not a few months, let alone years, effect in any of us ! His union with Emily had, as we know, once been looked upon by Tom as his *summum bonum*. Now he felt it to be a galling chain, which he would make any sacrifice, save that of honour, to be rid of. This high sense of honour had, however, the effect of making him all the more resolved on scrupulously doing his duty by his betrothed ; and so, on the day after his return, he wrote her a kind letter acquainting her with his good fortune ; and at the same time assuring her that it was more for her sake than for his own that he rejoiced at it. Cold as his sentiments towards her had become, our hero in saying this kept, nevertheless, strictly to the truth. He had been dreading the idea of taking a dissatisfied wife to some quiet, unpretending abode ; and he felt sure that there was a better chance of seeing Emily happy now that his own prospects had so materially improved.

Our hero's letter received an immediate reply.

Emily wrote as follows :—

DEAREST TOM,

I am so delighted to hear of your good fortune, indeed I am disposed quite to love Lord Worthington for his kindness to you. Mamma says she must try and get an introduction to him before we leave town, in order that she may have an opportunity of expressing to him her gratitude.

In eight days more, my own dearest, we shall be at home again, and oh ! how I shall count the hours till I see you. You must make no fresh engagements with your friend, Mr. Seymour, or with anyone else. I could not bear to be at Greyfield now if you were more than twelve miles away. You will come and see us, dearest, won't you, the day we come back, which will be next Monday week ? When am I to make the acquaintance of Mr. Maxwell ? I feel as if all your friends ought now to be mine. I shall expect one more letter from you before we meet. Mamma sends her best love. She has been looking as young and happy almost as her youngest daughter since the post brought us such good news. Adieu ! dearest till we meet.

Your most affectionate

EMILY.

Our hero read this lovingly worded epistle with the calm countenance of a stoic ; though, taking into account the immense influence which feminine charms possess over man, it might not unreasonably be expected that when Emily's fresh and sparkling beauty again greeted his eyes the dying embers of his love would once more be kindled.

It was welcome, overpowering news that Friday's post brought with it to the inhabitants of Beauchamp Cottage. Though the friend was to remain unknown, still Rachel felt confident as to who he was. Lizzie also made a very rapid guess at his name, though for a time she felt bashful about revealing her suspicions and, when she at length ventured on doing so, not one word or sign did she get from Rachel indicative of their correctness.

To the latter our hero's generosity occasioned little surprise ; indeed she was not in the least aware of the extent of it. The good woman had, like Mrs. Date, unbounded faith in the resources of a Baronet, and, actuated by these large views concerning Sir Thomas's wealth, she had had no hesitation in asking aid of one to whom, as she imagined, the immediate bestowal of some hundreds, or even thousands would be a matter of trifling importance. The experience of former years had, too, led her to believe that her appeal could not be made in vain. She had not, however, been quite sure of the young Baronet's address, and her young mistress was the last person whom she would have wished to take into her counsels. Disliking, besides, the idea of putting her letter into the Fairford post-office, on account of the gossipping reports which might arise therefrom, she had decided on walking over to Stowe, and on procuring there the information which she needed. Her sister had told her that her master was acquainted with Mr. Maxwell, and that she had seen the latter gentleman on two occasions at the Rectory. Rachel had, in consequence, made sure of getting the correct address from the Rector's wife, and in this her expectations had not been disappointed.

Another day had hardly passed before the whole village of Fairford was again actively engaged in discussing Mr. Lindsay's affairs. His probable ruin had been already so well talked over that, from a want of anything fresh to say on the subject, it

had been altogether dropped. Now, however, there was a fresh field open for gossipping rumours, a fresh opportunity for the indulgence of exaggerated reports. Mr. Lindsay, it was asserted, had been undoubtedly in trouble, but his daughter, being possessed of good private means, had generously come forward and helped him out of it. It was likewise whispered that Mr. Birch, attracted by Miss Lindsay's fortune as well as by her beauty, had been a suitor for her hand; that her rejection of his suit had made his sister indignant, and had caused her to speak in such disparaging terms of both father and child.

It is probable that Rachel herself had been the chief originator of these reports. She had been fearing lest it should be imagined by any member of Mr. Webb's household that it was her young mistress whom she had been thinking about when making inquiries at the Rectory a day or two previously respecting work, and eager to correct what she now conceived to have been a blunder, she made a visit there that same Friday evening for this special purpose.

“Well, Rachel, how's your master?” inquired the Rector's cook as, on entering her own domain, she found the faithful domestic there. “This trouble of his,” she went on, “have made a great change in him. I shouldn't 'a known him when I seed him last Sunday in Church if he'd been sitting anywhere else than in his own pew. 'Tis bad for a man at his age to find hisself as it were, left without the necessaries

of life ; not but what I'm equally sorry for the young lady, who must, I suppose, now do summut for her maintenance. Was it her as you was thinking on when you inquired about work the time as you was last here ? ”

Rachel hardly expected to have so direct a question put to her, neither did she well know how to answer it. She decided, however, on humouring her conscience by parrying it.

“ Miss Lindsay wanting work ! ” she exclaimed, “ not she. Miss Lindsay have got good private means of her own.” (Rachel overlooked the fact that these means were not as yet in her young mistress’s possession, and she believed she was telling the truth). “ To be sure,” she added, “ master have got into some trouble through the roguery of his agent ; but he’s going out to Jamaica himself, and he’ll soon, no doubt, put matters right.”

Betsey and Mary listened with respectful and wondering attention to Rachel’s report of her young mistress’s flourishing circumstances, and Betsy began to wish she had not put so blunt a question to her acquaintance.

“ And what will Miss Lindsay do when her pa’s away,” she inquired, doing her best to conceal her consciousness of the mistake she now supposed she had made.

“ Well, what she’d *like* to do would be to go along with master—but he’s no-ways willing that she should, so I expect as she and I will bide at home till he comes back.”

"T'will be a lonesome life for Miss Lindsay, won't it?" inquired Mary.

"Lonesome or not she'll make the best of it," said Rachel, with a feeling of conscious pride in her mistress's power of endurance.

"I thought," observed Betsy, "as young Mr. Birch was a bit partial to Miss Lindsay, but I'm told as it's no such thing."

"Young Birch was a great deal more partial to Miss Lizzie than she liked him to be," was Rachel's indignant reply, "and it's my opinion as 'tis he and Rosa that have been putting about all these scandalous stories, and that they have done it out of spite."

Betsy and Mary showed no disposition to keep Rachel's information to themselves. On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Webb on the following day, Mary, when narrating to her mistress all that had transpired in the village during the absence of the latter, mentioned at the same time the reports that had been in circulation concerning Mr. Lindsay's private affairs, as well as the new light that had been thrown upon the subject by her friend. She gave it also as a positive fact, rather than as a thing in contemplation, that Mr. Lindsay was going to the West Indies almost immediately, and that his daughter would in his absence have to remain at home, with only Rachel as her companion. This intelligence gave rise to some serious conversation between the rector and his

wife, and it ended in their deciding on inviting Lizzie to come and stay with them as long as her father was away.

CHAPTER XI.

AN HONEST ADMIRER.

THERE had for some time past been sundry rumours circulated in the village of Fairford wherein Jacob's and Lizzie's names had been very intimately associated. His constant Sunday walks as far as the cottage had none of them been allowed to pass unnoticed, and Mr. Lindsay's remarkable line of conduct on that particular Sunday, when he determined on confronting Jacob alone, was expected eagerly to bring about decisive results. The cessation of intercourse which afterwards ensued had, in unison with sundry insinuations thrown out by Rosa, led people to suppose that the fruit of that particular interview had been an acknowledgment on Jacob's part that his intentions meant nothing, ending in a decision that for the future they had better be discontinued.

Since then Lizzie had generally been looked upon as a disappointed girl ; and while the envious and the narrow-minded condemned her for indulging in such ambitious views, the more kindly-disposed among the community were inclined to bestow upon her their pity rather than their blame. Mr. Webb, the kind-hearted rector of Fairford, had, with his wife, been always among those who most warmly espoused her cause.

“ It is shameful conduct on the part of any man, I don’t care who,” Mr. Webb would emphatically assert, “ to show a girl such very particular attention, and then to cast her aside.”

It seemed therefore a question whether Rosa would not have better consulted her brother’s fair fame by abstaining from putting her own false colouring on the affair.

When our heroine returned from Aubrey, she for a time had looked just a little unhappy. It was quickly ferreted out that young Birch had not once appeared in the village during Lizzie’s stay with his aunt. The gossips therefore could find no sort of difficulty in discovering a reason for that something of sadness that betrayed itself on her fair countenance. It was, of course, as clear as daylight that Lizzie’s hopes and expectations had once more been raised, though only to be again deceived. A second time the rector and his wife proclaimed themselves her champions, Mr. Webb warmly asserting, whenever this fresh disappoint-

ment was alluded to in his presence, that it was a downright shame to trifle with a girl's feelings in that manner. He would likewise add that if he knew of any young man wanting a thoroughly good wife he would unhesitatingly recommend to him Miss Lindsay.

Mr. Fanshaw had been succeeded in the position he had once held as curate at Fairfield by a young man of the name of White, who, possessed as he was of a very amiable and affectionate disposition, had ever since his first arrival been feeling painfully his separation from a large and happy family circle. He found indeed but a poor exchange for what he had lost in the solitary life he was now leading in Mrs. Crisp's lodgings. The fact of his having her best parlour appropriated to his use was, he found, a very questionable advantage. Such high value indeed did his landlady set on the showy but trumpery furniture with which it had been newly decorated, that the gaudy carpet, the flimsy blue and red table-cover, and the loud-patterned chintzes formed a considerable portion of those trifles which made up the sum of poor Williams's present discomfort. As on the first Sunday after his arrival he looked down from his reading desk and marked the number and general appearance of those among whom he was to commence his ministerial labours, Lizzie's countenance had at once caught his attention.

Mr. Webb made it a rule always to invite his curate to

take an early Sunday dinner at the Rectory: and, the morning service being over, and Mr. White seated at table beside the Rector's wife, the former ventured modestly to inquire of her who was that very nice-looking girl occupying with an elderly man, apparently her father, one of the pews just in front of the reading desk.

"Oh! that is Miss Lindsay," was the reply; "and a good sensible, amiable girl she is too."

The Rector was too apt to think aloud, and his wife's remark had the effect of arousing within him a keen remembrance of the ill-usage that his young parishioner was supposed to have sustained, as well as the desire that she might receive compensation for the wrong that he imagined had been done her.

"Yes," he observed, "Lizzie Lindsay is a thoroughly good, kind-hearted girl, and nothing would please me more than to see her well married. She would make such a capital wife for a clergyman; but, unfortunately, there seems to be none about here in a position to marry."

Nothing could have been further from Mr. Webb's thoughts than that this remark of his should prove in any way suggestive to his curate, though such in fact it became. If he could but be the fortunate man through whose instrumentality the Rector's wishes were to be accomplished! Such was the fervent desire that it occasioned. Poor William was, however, to have but eighty pounds a year,

with the promise of an additional ten pounds from his father by way of a Christmas box ; and who, in his senses, would ever dare to venture on matrimony with such an income as that ? Still William hoped that better circumstances might be in store for him ; and so, Sunday after Sunday, he had from his reading-desk glanced down upon Lizzie, and had built in doing so, an airy castle in which she was to reign paramount.

Again, however, the rumour in the village became ripe that Lizzie had yet a chance of winning the prize for which it was supposed she had been seeking and sorrowing so long. The humble-minded curate never for a moment allowed himself to imagine that he could compete with the thriving lawyer, even though his yearly income were to be trebled ; and so the flowers which fancy had strewed for him in his path now withered at once, and he was left with none to dwell upon save those gaudy and, as they proved to him, less perishable ones which Mrs. Crisp's chintzes had to display.

When Mr. Lindsay's difficulties became the subject of general conversation no one in the village felt so deeply for both father and daughter as did William ; no one either wished so heartily as did he for the power to help them. Still his income of eighty pounds a year was a hard fact staring him in the face, and telling him forcibly though silently, that were he to enable himself, by marrying Lizzie,

to give something like a home both to her and to her destitute father, the consequences which so rash an act would entail might prove most serious ones. He could only therefore wish and wish that fortune were more just, and dwell in imagination on the generous acts he *could* be capable of, were the fickle goddess to bestow her golden favours upon him.

The Sunday after Rachel's second visit to her friend Mary, Mr. White found himself, as usual, partaking of the Rector's mid-day meal. Mrs. Webb was a woman who dearly loved a little romance, and having observed the glances that had been thrown from the reading desk towards Mr. Lindsay's pew, she had guessed rightly at the particular attraction which it contained for her husband's curate, and had hoped that the wish which those glances were expressive of might some day be fulfilled. Mr. White stood very high in the favour of this good woman, and now it was with a certain feeling of satisfaction that she imparted to him the intelligence which she had herself received on the previous day.

During the half-hour that Rachel spent at the Rectory, that Friday evening she had proved satisfactorily to both cook and housemaid how much Jacob had always been the object of her mistress's dislike. She had also convinced them that it was merely on account of the debt that Mr. Lindsay was so anxious to maintain a friendly feeling

between himself and the lawyer ; and that if Miss Lizzie's pleasure had been consulted he would never have been allowed to come near the house. Miss Lizzie did not look for money—not she—she had got enough of her own. She had certainly made over a large sum to her father for the payment of his debt, but she was sure to have it back again as soon as Mr. Lindsay's affairs were once more flourishing.

Rachel's statements had been reported by Mary to her mistress with just a touch of exaggeration ; and now the curate had the benefit of the original information, together with the finishing touches it had since received. Eagerly did he listen to Mrs. Webb's recital, and, as he sate in his own smart little apartment that Sunday evening, his thoughts assumed something of this form—

“ Miss Lindsay has never yet brought herself to speak civilly to Mr. Birch, so it is asserted, and yet how kindly and pleasantly has she not received me each time that I have called at the Cottage ? When, too, on one occasion the appearance of the tea things reminded me that it was time I should take my leave, did she not with her most engaging smile and manner invite me to remain and partake of the repast ? If money is really no object to Miss Lindsay, then my doubts in that quarter may be thrown aside. The position of a clergyman's wife is the one of all others which, in Webb's opinion, she is best fitted to fill. Can I reasonably

indulge the hope that she would ever condescend to look with favour on myself? Heaven knows the need I have of a companion, and how devoted I should be in my love for Miss Lindsay, were circumstances ever to render her such to me! I would never think of offering myself to her if by so doing there were a chance of my entailing on her the want of those comforts which by birth she is entitled to. If, however, she has so good a fortune, might we not live very comfortably and happily on that and on my own little income until the day arrives—that day which in imagination all curates must so love to dwell upon—the happy day when by some lucky chance or other a fair living is almost sure to fall to my lot?"

The curate's hopes so far preponderated over his doubts that he made himself happy with them throughout the evening and during the waking hours of the night. On the following morning, he was so unusually well got up that his landlady was thereby led to anticipate an intended visit on the part of her lodger to his cousin, Squire Hopkins, who lived five miles off; and the question was at once put to him, did he intend to dine at home? He did; but as he was going to call on the Barters and others, he might not be back punctually at one; and Mr. White blushed as he vouchsafed to his landlady this information.

A fresh, well-looking man was William White; one, too, who was far better deserving of the place he occupied at home as his "mamma's favourite" than are most of those

whom womanly caprice thinks fit to elevate to so perilous a position. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and his refined and sensitive nature brought with it a large amount of the diffidence which so often belongs to men of that class.

How then, our readers may perhaps inquire, could he, with his poor eighty pounds a year, have ever ventured on aspiring to one by whom the prosperous and highly esteemed young lawyer had been so resolutely rejected?

To this we would answer that, in spite of his natural diffidence, hope too was strong within the young man's breast, and now this feeling had just risen above that shrinking modesty which, without some such stimulant, would have kept poor William for ever in the shade. Besides, he did not mean at once to hazard a proposal, but merely to feel his way. He had just the ghost of an excuse for his early visit ; for Betty Jones was ill, and this was to be the important information which he was to be supposed especially to convey.

His modest, quiet knock was quickly answered by Rachel, with whom the curate was a decided favourite. In her opinion the young man's heart was in the right place, for the poor all blessed him when they spoke of him, declaring that he was the kindest and civilest spoken young man who had ever come amongst them. Lizzie, too, entertained as good an opinion of him as did Rachel, and it was with a

pleasant, cheerful smile, much in accordance with her present frame of mind, that she greeted him. Mr. Lindsay's manner was invariably kind, and the curate found his visit not so formidable as the intention which prompted it had been causing it to appear to his imagination.

William had not, it must be owned, the same conversational powers as were possessed by Jacob Birch ; and, as he was unable to amuse his host with a continual interchange of ideas, the latter had a good deal of time allowed him during the young man's visit for private observation, which ended in a persuasion that the curate had a fancy for his daughter. Mr. Lindsay had been feeling deeply, though silently ashamed of his own rashness in so earnestly desiring to have for a son-in-law a cold and hard-hearted dissembler. In the excess of his penitence he was at present disposed to rush into another extreme, and to think that for the future he could not sufficiently guard his child from the wiles and machinations of deceitful men. It was therefore with a slight tinge of formality in his manner that he bade William adieu.

“I hope that young man is altogether what he seems,” he observed as, after a cordial leave-taking from Lizzie, the curate modestly bowed himself out. “There is, though,” he added, “so little trust to be put in appearances.”

“Dear papa,” said Lizzie, something of astonishment mingling itself with her natural gaiety of manner, “whatever

can make you think that Mr. White is not altogether what he seems?"

"I have no actual reason, my love, for thinking so, but there is so much dissimulation in the world that it is well to be cautious."

"But, papa," said Lizzie smiling, "Mr. White's manner always appears to me to show so exactly what he is."

"So it would appear to anyone, but we must not always judge by manner;" and the worthy man, hugging himself in the idea of the cautious, deliberate character he was now going to assume by way of atonement for all former short-comings, commenced a conversation with his daughter concerning the line of conduct to be pursued by her while he was away, and summed up with a strong admonition against her entertaining any single young men during his absence.

Lizzie laughingly assented to his wishes, and so far satisfied her father; though he would have been better pleased had she given her promise with more seriousness of manner.

It seemed as if the Lindsay's quiet abode was to be beset by visitors on this particular day. They had just finished their early dinner at the cottage when Mrs. Webb's knock was heard, and she had not been seated many minutes before she announced the purport of her visit.

"I am told," she said, addressing Lizzie, "that your father thinks of leaving you for a time."

“My affairs will,” said Mr. Lindsay, answering for his daughter, “oblige me to leave England for Jamaica in the course of a fortnight.”

“And what will Lizzie do while you are away?”

“That,” was the reply, “has been rather a serious consideration with me. My daughter, however, assures me that she will not much mind being left alone in my absence, or rather under the charge of our excellent Rachel.”

“But, Lizzie, my dear,” said Mrs. Webb, who had a decided fondness for our heroine as well as for her husband’s curate, “had you not better come to us when your papa leaves you? He will not, I suppose be very long away, and if he is, you won’t be the less welcome on that account as our inmate.”

A phantom assuming the form of Jacob Birch presented itself to Lizzie’s imagination as she stammered a reply to the effect that, though she felt very much obliged to Mrs. Webb for her kindness, she thought she had better remain where she was.

Mr. Lindsay who, as regarded his daughter, intended for the future to practise as much caution as could by the most circumspect be deemed necessary by reason of the deceitfulness of the world; he having besides great faith in the experience and in the kind and motherly qualities of his visitor, at once and promptly accepted for our heroine the offer which the latter had a moment previously declined.

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you," he said, "though I feel with my daughter some hesitation in profiting by your hospitality to such an extent. However, I consider your kind proposal to be far too desirable a one to be rejected. I must, though, hope," he added, hesitating a little as he spoke, "that you will not refuse to accept something from us in the shape of payment for the additional expense which Lizzie's residence in your household will necessarily occasion."

With the notion now entertained by Mrs. Webb as regarded the extent of our heroine's resources she could see no objection to this arrangement. Her husband was by no means rich, and as the dispensing of her small charities among the poor occasioned her such infinite satisfaction that it often made her wish she had more to give, an additional guinea or so a week for Lizzie's board and lodging might she considered, be an enormous assistance to her in the way of bestowing alms where they were needed. She therefore warmly expressed her thanks for Mr. Lindsay's considerate proposal ; and now the only stumbling block which Lizzie could put in the way of this arrangement was her objection to the idea of leaving Rachel in the cottage all alone.

"Ah ! by the bye," exclaimed Mr. Lindsay, "I never thought of Rachel."

He had indeed been so entirely occupied with the extreme desirability of placing his daughter under safe

keeping, that he had for a time most unintentionally forgotten his faithful domestic.

“ We will ask her herself what she would like to do,” he continued, as he rose to ring the bell.

This new project evidently met with Rachel’s entire approbation, and she resolved on seeing no difficulties in the way. Having, though, a great consideration for her master’s pocket she proposed an amendment.

“ I’m thinking,” she said, “ as the best plan might be to shut up the cottage while master’s away. My sister told me as her Missis would be wanting help in the house at the time of her confinement, which she expected shortly. Now, if she hasn’t engaged anyone I think as I am just the person as would suit her. I could write to Sarah at once—or stay, ’twould save a day if I was to walk over there this evening and have a talk with Mrs. Elliott herself.”

This plan was pronounced by Mr. Lindsay to be an admirable one, and Lizzie felt she could offer no further objection.

Mrs. Webb had not left many minutes before Mrs. Barter made her appearance. She was profuse in her apologies to Mr. Lindsay for her husband’s apparent neglect in not accompanying her; but he was, she said, glued as it were to his desk, and she only hoped that he would not injure his health by such close application to business. She had come on that particular day chiefly for the purpose of inviting Mr.

and Miss Lindsay to meet a few of their friends at dinner on Wednesday, and she hoped the shortness of the invitation would not be a hindrance to their accepting it.

Mr. Lindsay coldly but politely expressed his acknowledgement of the attention, which, however, he felt obliged to decline for both.

Mrs. Barter refused to recognise in the manner of the so recently contemned and slighted man anything but the extreme of cordiality. She had, indeed, come with a resolution that she would allow nothing to put her out, and his future plans she discussed with all the familiarity of an old friend.

“What is Lizzie to do in her papa’s absence?” she anxiously inquired; and, having been enlightened on this point, she gave Mr. Lindsay the benefit of her best wishes for his safety throughout his approaching voyage.

She then chatted away fluently and pleasantly on general subjects, until her various topics had all expended themselves, and she took her departure with profuse expressions of her regard for Miss Lindsay, whom she hoped to see in her papa’s absence.

“This unknown friend seems likely to bring us many others,” said Mr. Lindsay with an unwonted sarcasm in his tone as soon as their visitor was out of sight and hearing, an observation which was responded to by Lizzie with a smile, indicating that she believed the sarcasm to be deserved.

There was then a momentary pause during which time our heroine seemed to be summoning up courage to hazard a remark of her own.

“It was very kind in Mrs. Webb to make that proposal,” she observed, colouring as she spoke; “but,” she added, “do you know, papa, I would much rather remain here with Rachel.”

“I daresay you would, my love,” was the reply; “but I am not the less sure all the same that it is best you should be under the protection of some respectable lady while I am away, and that nothing could be more desirable than the offer I have just accepted for you.”

“But, papa,” said Lizzie, colouring still more, “I should so dislike to come in the way of Jacob Birch!”

Mr. Lindsay gave one of his customary sighs, which were always at command when anything perplexed him.

“I did not sufficiently take this into account,” he at last observed. “I think I had better go and speak to Mrs. Webb on the subject.”

“Oh, no, papa,” exclaimed Lizzie, her whole tone and look and manner giving, with her words, an emphatic prohibition of any such confidence.

“But, papa,” she added, the dread of an encounter with her quondam lover being still rife within. “But, papa, as Rachel is going over to Stowe this evening, don’t you think she might ask Mrs. Elliott if I could be there while you are

away. If she were to consent I could easily tell Mrs. Webb that I did not wish to leave Rachel."

"But, my dear," argued her father, "it is so improbable that Mrs. Elliott would like to receive a stranger into her family."

"Perhaps not," was the reply, given in a hesitating tone. "Only," Lizzie added, "it struck me that I might undertake to teach and look after the children a little; and Rachel says the worry Mrs. Elliott was in about them when she was ill before was supposed to have retarded her recovery."

"But what are Mrs. Elliot's children to you or to me either?" inquired Mr. Lindsay somewhat peevishly.

"Oh! nothing at all, as far as that goes; only Rachel was saying something after her last visit to her sister about the probability there might be of my getting a situation in Mrs. Elliott's family as governess."

"As governess!" said Mr. Lindsay sharply, his feelings of pride getting the better of him. "Don't talk to me about going off to a perfect stranger in the capacity of governess, when you can get so desirable a temporary home with a friend."

"I did not mean that papa."

"Then what do you mean?" said Mr. Lindsay somewhat impatiently. He had been feeling very comfortable in the thought of having found so good a protectress for his daughter, and now his temper was getting just a little

ruffled by the objections and the counter propositions of the latter.

Rachel's appearance at this moment, as she entered the room equipped for her walk, put a stop for the present to any further explanation on the part of our heroine.

"I've put the tea-things all ready," she said, "and I suppose as nothing more will be wanted to be done before I start."

"Nothing, thank you," said Lizzie.

"But, Rachel, stop," said Mr. Lindsay, as the former was just in the act of disappearing. "What nonsense is this that my daughter has got hold of about going to Mrs. Elliott's in the capacity of governess?"

"La!" exclaimed Rachel, looking quite scared at the idea, though it was one she had herself first started; "La, sir, thee wilt never allow Miss Lizzie to do anything of the sort?"

"Most certainly not," was Mr. Lindsay's amicable reply. He was pleased at the strong expression of dissent given to the proposal by his domestic. "Lizzie will be an inmate of the Rectory while I am away. However," he added, his whole appearance and manner bearing evidence to the pain it occasioned him to enter upon such a subject—"However, my daughter will, as she most justly observes, find it a very awkward thing should she ever be thrown in the way of Mr. Birch while she is there."

"La ! there's no fear of that ; so, at least, I should suppose. Mary—that is the housemaid at the Rectory—knows all the circumstances, and no doubt she has informed her mistress of them."

"And how ever came Mary to know so much ?" inquired Lizzie, her countenance and manner betokening both annoyance and astonishment.

"Why, how was she to know except by my telling her?" was the cool reply.

"Oh ! oh !" said Lizzie, reproachfully, for she felt a most sensitive shrinking from the thought of having that unfortunate affair so publicly discussed.

"Well, Miss Lizzie," said Rachel with a look of resolute pride, "I wasn't going to hear no lies told about thee without setting folks right ; and as Betsy, (she's cook, you know at the Rectory,) had got it as thee hadst been disappointed in love, and all through that young hypocrite, I up and tells her the whole truth. Not as thee wert never engaged, Miss Lizzie, I wouldn't go so far as to say that."

It was for Mr. Lindsay to colour now, and finding how very disagreeable was the subject he had entered upon, he hinted to Rachel that she had better start at once on her long expedition, as the day was wearing on.

In spite of the unpleasantness of Rachel's revelation, there was one consolation to be derived from it. It gave Mr. Lindsay and his daughter the assurance that, prompted by

her kind and womanly feelings, Mrs. Webb would carefully guard her guest from all annoyance in the shape of unpleasant companionship ; and now the one remaining fear was confined to the bosom of the father. Mr. Lindsay had a sort of suspicion that Mr. White might show himself disposed to play the agreeable to his daughter, and probably to win her affections before he, her natural guardian and protector, had time and opportunity afforded him to sift thoroughly the character of the young man, and to decide whether he were really deserving of her hand.

However, he hoped that by giving both the Rector and his wife a quiet hint on the subject, no serious consequences would arise.

CHAPTER XII.

LORD SCAMPERWELL had for a couple of weeks been away from town and had only just returned. While our friends at Beauchamp Cottage were on that Monday afternoon engaged with their visitors, his Lordship chanced to be paying his respects to his aunt, the gay and fashionable Lady Myrtle.

"It is a pity, Fitzmaurice," she observed, "that you were not at the party we gave on Saturday. You who are such an admirer of beauty. It was the first time I had seen Miss Emily Marchmont, whose looks have certainly been by no means overrated. I think, really, she has the most perfect face and form I ever saw."

"Oh ! I know Emily Marchmont very well," was his

Lordship's reply, given with much apparent *nonchalance*. "I met her down in Huntingdownshire last Christmas."

"Oh! You have seen her then! Don't you think her extremely pretty?"

"Yes," said his Lordship in the same indifferent tone.

"I think," her Ladyship went on, "if Harry Flitaway were ever to be caught by any girl, Emily Marchmont would be that one."

"Miss Marchmont is, I believe, already caught," was his Lordship's laconic reply.

"Caught in a way," said her Ladyship with the accent of dubious assent. "I am told, though," she added, "that Lady Marchmont does not like this engagement that her daughter has entered into, and it struck me that she did not herself behave the other evening as if her heart were yet altogether given to any man."

Sir Harry Flitaway and Lord Scamperwell were rivals in the art of winning feminine devotion, and as the Baronet's vocal powers were vastly superior to those of the peer, he had, perhaps, in London drawing-rooms, a larger circle of young lady admirers than fell to his Lordship's share. The Peer was in consequence a little jealous of the accomplished and wealthy Baronet, and he did not at all relish the hint which his aunt's words seemed to convey. He felt indeed it would be intolerable were that vain, conceited fellow, Sir Harry, to carry off the beauty who had occasioned his

Lordship such serious mortification some three weeks previously.

"I conclude Sir Thomas is not at present in town," he observed.

"Oh, no. It is indeed reported that he could not afford the expense of being in town at his own cost, and that he is at present living on the charity of some old friend."

His Lordship dwelt on his aunt's words as much as he was capable of dwelling on anything, and on the following morning he was, at the orthodox hour, to be seen in the park, accompanied by Mr. Marsh, a club acquaintance, and one who was occasionally honoured by Mrs. Gaystone with an invitation. His Lordship's keen eye soon despaired Emily with Georgie at her side and her aunt's groom behind her. He had already formed his plan and now he acted upon it with consummate coolness. Passing close beside this formerly forsaken flame of his, he assumed in doing so the air of a very injured man and refused to recognise her. The petted beauty felt just a little piqued at this apparent slight on the part of his Lordship, and she resolved that when she next met this former admirer she would compel him to acknowledge that he knew her. So well did she succeed that in return for the graceful bow and enchanting smile, which could not fail of eliciting his Lordship's attention, the latter again turned his horse's head and placed himself beside her, while Mr. Marsh and Georgie fell

behind and at once commenced a very earnest conversation on the various events that had occurred in the fashionable world during the last week.

“I fancied the other day,” said his Lordship to his companion in a tone of gentle reproof, Emily’s look and manner giving him every encouragement so to speak; “I fancied the other day that you were not in the humour to renew your acquaintance with me, and I felt, in consequence that it was my duty to retire.”

Emily murmured an earnest denial of so grievous a charge, which still more emboldened his Lordship.

“I have,” he went on, “ever since we parted last winter been looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you again, and I hardly expected the repulse I got the other day.”

There was the old look of gratified vanity sparkling in Emily’s eye, and playing round her lips.

“Would it be thought an intrusion,” he inquired, with a pretence at humility, “if I did myself the honour of calling on Lady Marchmont?”

“Oh! how can you talk so?” exclaimed Emily, “as if mamma could look upon a visit from you as an intrusion.”

“Then I shall hope to pay my respects to her this afternoon,” said his Lordship, and it was with a feeling of triumph that he noted the gratified look with which his proposed visit was hailed.

She is far too pretty a girl, that—to be thrown away on a

low-bred fellow like Sir Thomas. I should not exactly like to see her carried off by Harry Flitaway either; but matrimony is an intolerable bore, and not likely to profit anyone that I can see, except perhaps country parsons and elderly men in want of companions.

Such were his Lordship's reflections as, on taking leave of Emily, he rode back towards his Club. However his fears lest he might be driven into matrimony unawares did not deter him from paying his promised visit, or from taking some pains to look his best for the occasion. Neither Mrs. Gaystone nor Georgie were at home, and on being ushered into the drawing-room, the first object that caught his Lordship's attention was Sir Harry Flitaway, seated close beside Emily, with whom he was carrying on a desperate flirtation. The beauty seemed closely guarded on her left by a lady visitor whom Juliana was endeavouring to entertain, while the sofa in an opposite corner of the room was occupied by Lady Marchmont and some ponderous and magnificently arrayed Dowager.

Her Ladyship did not receive Lord Scamperwell in quite so *empressé* a manner as she had done on a former occasion. On the contrary, there was a freezing coldness in her manner when he approached her, and though Emily gave him a beaming smile, yet she could not displace Sir Harry for his sake. Juliana entertained a strong suspicion that his Lordship was come merely with the intention of again making mischief, and

of keeping her youngest sister still on hand. Her reception of him was not, in consequence, much more gracious than her mother's, while there was something in Sir Harry's eye expressive of mischievous triumph, as he glanced at his friend, and marked his determined efforts at joining in the conversation that was going on between Juliana and Miss Finch. The look was not lost upon his Lordship, who resolved that though the Baronet seemed at present to be master of the situation, he would enjoy his own triumph by and bye.

Lady Marchmont and her daughters were going to a morning concert, and the announcement of the carriage caused Sir Harry to rise from his seat for the purpose of taking leave. His Lordship felt himself bound to follow the Baronet's example, but not till the latter had fairly left the room. As he shook hands with Emily, she gave him a look indicative of her desire to keep him as an admirer still, and he found compensation in it for the cold and distant leave-taking that was vouchsafed him by her mother and sister.

Since his morning's interview with Emily had taken place, the report had been bruited that his Lordship, having on a previous occasion had the hardihood to endeavour at winning, in defiance of her acknowledged lover, more attention from the reigning beauty than he could in any way claim of right, and having at that time experienced a signal

rebuff, had on this particular morning been making another attempt at eliciting from her some mark of favour, and that the fair lady, having on this occasion no Cerberus at her side, had condescended to favour him with the smiles for which he sued. Among others, this report had been communicated to Sir Harry, and had in great measure prompted his afternoon's visit.

The Baronet was about the last person that Lord Scamperton-well wished just now to meet, and as he left the house where he had so unexpectedly come in the way of his rival, he sauntered along very leisurely in order that he might encounter no risk of overtaking him. It chanced however that both went in the same direction. Sir Harry having occasion to call on a friend of his who lived close at hand, and whom he wished particularly to see. His friend not being at home he wrote him a few lines on a card ; this took up time, and so it happened that the Baronet turned from the hall door into the street, just at the moment that his Lordship was passing. A sort of coolness had recently sprung up between them in consequence of some want of courtesy which had, as the Baronet imagined, been shown him by the peer, and Sir Harry was just now entertaining that sort of feeling towards his Lordship which induces a man to delight in saying unpleasant things. This feeling decided him on joining his acquaintance, and expressing an opinion which it would be knew be disagreeable to the latter to hear.

“Depend upon it, my Lord, you won’t make a conquest in that quarter,” he observed, making as he did so a movement with his stick towards the square they had both just quitted.

“What will you bet me,” said his Lordship, goaded by the Baronet’s sarcastic speech into a determination that he would take in real earnest the irrevocable plunge. “What will you bet me that Miss Emily Marchmont does not in three days time absolve herself from her engagement with her cousin, for the purpose of pledging herself to me.”

“What will I bet you?” said Sir Harry scornfully, “why a thousand pounds, and I never felt more sure of winning a wager.”

“Done!” said his Lordship, and bowing to his acquaintance he walked down Bond Street, considering how he might best turn his tactics towards the accomplishment of this creditable feat.

Lord Scamperwell was on rather intimate terms with Mrs. Gaystone, and it was at her house that he had made the acquaintance of Sir Charles. When, therefore, on the following morning he caught sight of Lady Marchmont and her daughters in Regent Street, where they were engaged in the lengthy process of shopping, he at once seized his opportunity and rode off to Grosvenor Square. Mrs. Gaystone was ignorant of his Lordship’s former desperate flirtation with her niece, and she received him with her

usual cordiality. He began at once to talk of Emily—of her extraordinary beauty, and of his own intense admiration of it. He then asked very confidentially what Mrs. Gaystone thought of Sir Thomas.

“Well,” she said, “I have nothing to say against him, but I think nevertheless the match was made up in too great a hurry, and that Emily might have done much better if she had only waited a little. However, Sir Thomas’s prospects are improving, and, as he seems an intelligent young man, I dare say he may get on. I confess though myself to wishing that the engagement had not been entered into with such haste.”

“And I wish, and that most heartily,” said his Lordship, “that you could only have been at Lady Marchmont’s side to have recommended a little delay at the time the offer was made. I was indulging last winter in the hope that I might in time have won your niece myself, and had been looking forward to the pleasure of meeting her here.”

“Do you really mean what you say?” inquired Mrs. Gaystone. “You have been such a deceiver among women,” and she gave him an arch smile as she spoke, “that one hardly knows how to feel sure whether you are in earnest or not.”

“Upon my soul, I never was more in earnest in my life,” was his Lordship’s reply, though whether he really imagined that he had a soul to bear witness to his assertion, is a question admitting a doubt.

“Then if you are seriously thinking of matrimony, and wish to make Emily your wife, I think I could manage matters for you. I cannot think that Emily has any very strong feeling for her cousin, and I believe, even now, that it would be a positive relief to my sister if the marriage were off.”

“Then I can only say,” said his Lordship, “that if anything of the kind were to happen, and if Miss Emily were disposed to look favourably on my suit, I should consider myself the happiest of men.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Gaystone, smiling blandly as she spoke, “I think I can promise you the success you wish for.”

His Lordship was profuse in his thanks, and in considering over it when he left, Mrs. Gaystone flattered herself that she had done a very clever stroke of business. She was determined too on getting full credit for it by letting her sister know how entirely it was through her own diplomatic skill that her beautiful niece had now the opportunity offered her of making the most brilliant marriage which the fashionable world had at that time to offer.

CHAPTER XIII.

STARTLING BUT NOT UNWELCOME NEWS.

THE last day of the week had arrived. In two days more the Marchmonts were expected home, and Tom had promised Emily that he would go over to Greyfield on the evening of their return. He was feeling nervous and restless, and quite out of sorts with himself and with the world in general. He and Mr. Maxwell were engaged to a dinner-party at the Annesleys. Wearily and listlessly did our hero ascend the stairs for the purpose of preparing himself for the occasion, and yet he preferred the small excitement attendant on dining out to the *ennui* he would have experienced had he spent the evening at home. Lord Worthington was there, together with other visitors from town, who brought with them all the freshest news of the metropolis. Politics,

pictures, and the “on dits” of the fashionable world were all discussed in turn. It was Tom’s fate to take in to dinner one Mrs. Cranmore, a very deaf old lady who, feeling that her physical infirmity was all against her proving herself a very agreeable companion to the young man, whose name she had not caught, did her best to atone for other deficiencies by imparting to him as much information as she could.

“Do you happen to know Miss Emily Marchmont?” she inquired, “I am told the family resides somewhere in this neighbourhood.”

“I do,” said Tom; but not with the manner of a man who felt proud in the consciousness of being so peculiarly connected as he was with the young lady in question.

“I don’t suppose though you have heard of the grand marriage she is about to make,” Mrs. Cranmore went on. “Indeed you can’t have done so, for I am told the affair was only settled yesterday.”

Our hero started and turned red, while the fire that darted from his eye startled the old lady even more than her words had startled him.

“What grand marriage?” he inquired hastily.

“Why she is just engaged to Lord Scamperwell,” said Mrs. Cranmore, a little nervously. “A friend we happened to be travelling with gave us the intelligence.”

“I am very glad indeed to hear of it,” growled Mr.

Maxwell, in a tone loud enough to be heard by Mrs. Cranmore, deaf as she was.

“The engagement took place on Thursday,” observed Mr. Chase to his companion, Mrs. Youngfellow. “I saw Harewood this morning, who was telling me all about it;” and as he spoke, Mr. Chase gave a look at Tom, indicative of the alarm as well as the gratification he was experiencing at having ventured on saying so much. The Barone had, among some members of the sporting community, the reputation of being an ill-conditioned cur, with just enough of the bulldog about him to render him formidable, and Mr. Chase was not at all ambitious of getting into hot water with one who was notoriously a good shot.

We must now return to Mrs. Cranmore who, after her momentary discomfiture, was feeling delighted at having been instrumental in conveying some gratifying intelligence to one at all events of her auditors.

“It is, I fancy, a greater match than Lady Marchmont anticipated for any of her daughters,” she went on, addressing herself to Mr. Maxwell, whose expression of gratification now emboldened her to make further comments on the event. “They say Lord Scamperwell is one of the richest peers in the kingdom.”

“It is a marriage I should not rejoice in for one of my daughters!” observed Mrs. Marks quietly to Mr. Annesley at whose side she was placed.

Hereupon Mr. Chase muttered something to Mrs. Youngfellow in allusion to the fable of the fox and the grapes.

“I wish Miss Emily joy of her bargain!” Mr. Maxwell again observed in a loud and resolute tone, “and I hope she may purchase with his Lordship’s riches as much pleasure as she needs. I suspect, though, there are many mothers like yourself, madam, who would be very unwilling to intrust their daughter’s happiness to a man like that, even though he were ten times as rich as report describes Lord Scamperwell as being. Many sensible men have been fooled before now by a pretty face. I am happy in thinking that the remarkable beauty possessed, as I am informed, by Miss Marchmont, should have ensnared one whose mental endowments are, I should imagine, so much upon a par with her own.”

Mrs. Cranmore found it impossible to follow Mr. Maxwell through the whole of his harangue. It left, however, an impression on her mind that the old gentleman was a warm friend and a great admirer of Miss Emily Marchmont; that he thought many girls possessed of pretty faces were mere fools, but that such was not the case with her; that she had, on the contrary, very superior mental endowments, which rendered her in every way worthy of the high position she was about to occupy as Lady Scamperwell; and we may be sure that she eagerly communicated the shrewd old

gentleman's supposed sentiments to the next acquaintance she might chance to meet.

Were it not for the annoyance which one man must always experience when he finds himself cheated by another out of the girl he has been engaged to, Tom's sensation would have been one of positive rapture when this unexpected piece of news was imparted to him. However, the sense of injured pride betrayed itself on his countenance more openly than did his feeling of relief from a burthen-some engagement, which an hour previously he would have surrendered both title and estates honourably to have unloosed. He was anxious to conceal both his pleasure and his annoyance, and he soon threw himself into the current of conversation as if nothing had happened to upset his equilibrium.

Alice had observed the start with which the announcement of this fresh engagement had been received by our hero. She was, besides, firmly persuaded of the love he bore to Emily, and now the whole of her very large stock of sympathy she was disposed at once to bestow upon one who, as she conceived, had been so shamefully used. His affected indifference she saw through, though the happy look which his countenance afterwards wore was somewhat of a puzzle to her. Anyhow Tom was an injured man, and as such deserving of every attention and consideration ; and so she was induced, diffident and shy as she was, to come

forward on his appearance in the drawing-room for the purpose of proposing that he should play a game at chess with her. The offer was pleasantly, indeed warmly, accepted, though our hero was so pre-occupied throughout the game that it was won by Alice with the greatest ease, even though she had twice insisted on his taking back his queen when he had put it in check.

Our hero's unusually happy look was not unmarked by Mr. Maxwell, who at once associated it with an intention on the part of his *protégé* to woo, and if possible, to win the the bright-eyed Laura. It was, in his opinion, quite judicious that Alice rather than her sister should be the one just at first to show him attention. It would hardly, he thought, be the thing for Tom to be immediately on with the new love, though he did not think it at all undesirable that he should himself do a little love-making in our hero's behalf, and Laura always received with pleasure the attentions of her elderly admirer.

Mr. Maxwell was, in fact, in glorious spirits, and as he and his young friend journied homewards,

“I have been thinking, Tom,” he observed, “that all your spare money ought to go towards paying off the mortgages on your property. It is my intention, therefore, to make you a free gift of that three thousand pounds. I have been rather wondering,” he went on, without giving our hero time to express his thanks, “that you have never yet

been over to Fairford to see this very old friend of yours."

"I feel I have been very remiss in this respect," burst forth Tom, the pleasant feelings which this last remark aroused in him quite casting into the shade his gratification at his old friend's first announcement. "The fact is," he went on, "I have been feeling altogether out of sorts of late and —"

"Oh, there is no need to inform me of that," said Mr. Maxwell, interrupting him. "I must have been blind indeed if I had not seen it myself. I should be sorry, Tom, to have to pass my life with such a moping, melancholy companion as I have found you during the last week."

"I am very sorry —"

"Oh, there is no need to apologise ; but about this visit. I have been thinking you should show Lord Worthington the attention of calling on him on Monday, as he leaves on the following day —"

"But not till late in the afternoon," interposed Tom. "I have been thinking I ought really to lose no more time in going and looking up my old friend Lizzie. Indeed," he went on with a deep blush which it was too dark for Mr. Maxwell to observe, "I told Mrs. Annesley I should be out the whole day on Monday when she kindly proposed that I should join their archery meeting, which they hold on that day."

“Quite right,” thought Mr. Maxwell to himself. “It would not do for Tom so soon to commence showing in public his admiration for my charming young friend.”

There was no post at Maplewood on Sunday, but letters were occasionally brought by some chance hand; and it happened thus on the day following the Annesley’s dinner party. The solitary one addressed to Tom was in Lady Marchmont’s hand-writing. With nervous impatience our hero opened it, for he was beginning to fear lest the contents might give a contradiction to the report he had so recently heard. He had been dreaming of Lizzie all through the night, and to have had the hopes which those dreams conveyed to him all at once destroyed—such violence as this, had it been put upon his feelings, would have sorely tried his sense of honour, strong though it was.

We will, for our reader’s gratification, report what her Ladyship had to say :

MY DEAR TOM,

I feel it to be my painful duty, as Emily’s mother, to acquaint you with her change of feeling as regards yourself. I trust she may be happy in the new path she has marked out for herself, and that you may in time learn to see with her that all has been arranged for the best. Dear Emily’s visit to London has, in fact, made her so enamoured of the gay world that I have long perceived how more and more unfitted she was getting for the very quiet life she would have to lead as your wife. However, I kept those fears to myself till spoken to seriously on the subject

by my sister, whose judgment has so generally guided mine. It was to her that Lord Scamperwell confided his views—views to which the dear girl was not in the winter prepared to respond. However, her aunt spoke to her very seriously on the subject, pointing out to her the danger she incurred in taking upon herself the duties of a position for which she was so entirely unfitted, and this powerful influence, in addition to his Lordship's entreaties, has at last prevailed. We all sincerely hope that there may be a continuation of friendly feeling between yourself and us. Be assured we shall none of us be wanting in our endeavours to maintain it; and earnestly wishing you health, happiness, and prosperity,

I am sincerely yours,
E. MARCHMONT.

“Does the woman think you such a fool as to be taken in with these paltry excuses!” growled Mr. Maxwell, after having read the letter which Tom handed to him. “But they are all alike, Tom, depend upon it—these women who live for the world—heartless, deceitful, treacherous. You have got well out of their meshes this time, and I only hope you will be wary enough now never to be dragged into them again.”

“I think I may safely make you a promise to that effect,” was the reply.

Tom was employed during the next quarter of an hour first in collecting together all Emily's letters, which he made into a parcel and then directed it to her. He then sate down and wrote to her Ladyship as follows:—

DEAR LADY MARCHMONT,

I most heartily congratulate yourself and your daughter on the very satisfactory engagement which it appears the latter has entered into. I am quite sure this fresh arrangement cannot be more productive of happiness to her than it will be to me. I beg to return all letters, and am,

Sincerely yours,

T. MARCHMONT.

We may as well mention here that our hero's laconic epistle so much piqued Emily's vanity that she forbade its being shown to her present admirer; while Mrs. Gaystone decided that a man who was able on such an occasion to write in so cool and indifferent a manner could have no heart at all.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE UNCHANGEABLE.

AS IT was only just five when our hero first consulted his watch on that bright morning in May, he lay unquietly for half an hour longer, and then got up and dressed. His early appearance in the stable-yard a little startled the groom who, however, promptly obeyed the young Baronet's orders as regarded the saddling of his horse. It was half-past six when Tom re-entered the hall, where he came across Rogers who had himself just finished the operation of dressing.

"Will you tell your master," he said to him, "that I thought when I awoke this morning that it would be best to start early, as Fairford is so far away."

"But you are never going all that distance without having

anything in the way of breakfast," exclaimed the old butler who was no friend to fastings of any kind.

"Oh, if I can have a crust of bread," said our hero, "I shall do very well;" and the crust appeared and was demolished just as Wellington was brought round.

Tom felt himself to be the happiest of the happy as he mounted Wellington and rode away; however, the journey was long and the young man had no other companion save his own thoughts, and so after a time he began to feel just a little nervous. A jilted man is not one that women are ordinarily proud of or eager to accept themselves; and our hero's mortifying position as such became more and more painfully apparent to him the nearer he approached the village, the church tower of which, as it loomed in the bright sunlight, reminded him how soon the word might be spoken which was to make or mar his future happiness.

"Can you tell me where to find Beauchamp Cottage?" he inquired of the ostler, as, alighting at the door of the one inn of which the village could boast, he asked for accommodation for his noble steed.

"Go straight on towards the church," said the man, "you will see a gate right in front of it on the opposite side of the road. If you takes the path straight across the fields, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, you will not be long afore you finds yourself there."

Tom did not, our readers may feel assured, allow the grass

to grow under his feet, as turning from the road into the fields, he pursued his onward course.

“Whose cottage is that?” he eagerly inquired of a country girl whom he met, as bounding over a gate, he got into the one long field which now lay between him and the object of his search.

“Please Sir, Mr. Lindsay do live there,” said the girl. Tom’s recent engagemant and the humiliation it had brought with it, seemed altogether to have perished out of his memory as he now walked onwards with rapid strides. Crossing over the road, he swung open the garden gate with the action of a man who was too much in earnest to allow of a resting place within for any sentiment like fear.

Breakfast was just over at the cottage, and Lizzie and her father were enjoying in the garden the freshness of the bright May morning. They were standing at the verandah where Lizzie was engaged in picking a few honeysuckles and early roses, with which to renovate her flower glass. Hearing the gate open she turned round, looking at our hero while in the act of doing so, very like the Lizzie of old, with her face shaded by a white cotton bonnet, such as it was her wont formerly to wear. Tom, in like manner, forcibly reminded our heroine of her old playfellow when, after a hard game of cricket, he would come in, heated and animated, to join the Quaker’s hospitable board. There was something in our heroine’s aspect which kindled into flame

the love that filled the breast of our hero, and it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from rushing towards her and at once proclaiming himself her adorer. However, he did restrain himself, and by so doing Lizzie had the chance afforded her of quite meeting him half way.

Tears were in our heroine's eyes as her lover warmly grasped her hand—tears borrowing a lustre from the smile that played round her lips, and becoming under its magic influence, beautiful and pleasant to dwell upon. Those smiles and tears, so charmingly blended, at once emboldened Tom.

“Well, Lizzie,” he said, still holding her hand, “you have at last freed yourself from that miserable engagement. You are now free———!”

There was a look of mortification in our heroine's countenance as these words were uttered, for they brought with them painful memories which she had well nigh succeeded in forgetting. She had hoped besides that that one false step which pity combined with terror had, as it were, driven her into taking would never become known beyond the precincts of the village. Her look of mortification was marked by Tom, and it made him hesitate. Had she then really loved Jacob, such were the young Baronet's thoughts, and if so, would it be altogether prudent in him at once to declare his own sentiments? That a false and sneaking hypocrite should ever have won the love of a fine and beautiful nature—of a nature such as Lizzie's—the mere

thought was so unpleasant to our hero that it filled his heart with a feeling bordering on anger.

Mr. Lindsay now came forward to greet his early visitor, and had it been Majesty itself that was honouring that garden walk by treading on it, its presence could not have been recognized by the worthy man with more respectful reverence.

In spite of Lizzie's emotion at his approach—in spite of her father's grateful and flattering manner, Tom, as he entered the sitting-room, was feeling a little cast down. He fancied he was not so sure after all of winning the prize he had come to seek. Meanwhile our heroine was entirely occupied with the desire she had to ask her old friend, point-blank, whether he were not their unknown benefactor, and then having ascertained the fact for a certainty, to express to him all the gratitude that she felt. However her courage failed her. Rachel had been as close as wax on the subject of the letter, neither had our heroine ever won from her a hint that she knew from whence such ample succour came.

Lizzie's perplexity rendered her, for the moment, somewhat absent, while Tom's courage became fainter and fainter.

“Have you had any breakfast, Sir Thomas?” soon inquired Mr. Lindsay.

“Not much,” was the reply, and the Baronet looked anxiously into Lizzie's face in order to decide by her

countenance whether he would or not avail himself of her father's hospitality.

With a bright and eager glance directed towards our hero, "I will go," Lizzie said, "and tell Rachel to get something ready for Sir Thomas at once," and she went towards the door. She hoped that Rachel would be able in some manner to help her out of her embarrassment, and so she gladly availed herself of an excuse for going and consulting her.

"Sir Thomas."——— Our hero liked not the sound, coming as it did from Lizzie's lips, and it made him as it were desperate. There was another name that had caught his ear—it was Rachel's.

"Is that your old nurse?" he inquired, as our heroine was in the act of opening the door.

"Yes," she said, with a smile of pleasure. "You remember Rachel?"

"Of course I do, and I shall be delighted to renew my acquaintance with my old friend. May I go with you just to shake hands with her?"

As a drowning man catches at a straw, so Tom caught at the hope that Rachel might save him from sinking quite into despair.

"Oh! I will tell her to come to you," and the smile on Lizzie's face became yet more radiant.

It was that last smile that made our hero a man again. He feared nothing—he cared not what his host might think.

With a resolute step he followed his old playmate into the kitchen, unwarrantably familiar though the act might seem. Rachel was washing up her cups and saucers, and it startled her not a little as, looking up, she saw her young mistress enter the premises with this unexpected visitor following close behind.

“Master Tom!” she exclaimed, forgetting all befitting epithets as, in the surprise of the moment, she rushed towards him with her hand extended.

“How are you Rachel?” said the Baronet, as he grasped and shook it cordially.

“Quite well, Sir, I thank thee, but thee hast just a little taken my breath away—it was such a surprise,” and Rachel involuntarily put her hand to her heart as she made Tom a low curtsey. “I have much to thank thee for,” she continued after a short pause, and then she checked herself, for she remembered that her master and mistress’s benefactor had wished to remain unknown. Lizzie however caught at the few words which she had already uttered.

“Then it *was* you——” she exclaimed. She could proceed no further, for it was so evident that our hero wished to have nothing said on the subject.

Rachel felt considerable compunction at having in any way thwarted the wishes of this generous friend, and so, to mend matters, she brought somewhat abruptly another affair under notice. Though any expression of thanks seemed so

unwelcome to the Baronet, it was not possible, so Rachel conceived, that congratulations could come amiss to him, and she thought herself quite sure of the ground she was now going to tread upon.

"Thee will not think it a liberty," she said, "if I congratulate thee on thy approaching marriage. I hope as thee———"

"I am not going to be married," said Tom impatiently interrupting her. He was hoping that his very recent engagement might have been kept in the background, at all events for a time. "I am not going to be married ; at least, it depends upon Miss Lindsay whether I do so or not."

It was apparently out of pique that our hero laid such stress on Lizzie's title of spinsterhood ; but, as he turned and looked at her, every uncomfortable feeling he might have been cherishing vanished at once. There was that in our heroine's countenance which so far emboldened her lover that he threw his arm round her waist, then taking one of her hands,—"It is Lizzie only that I will marry ; if she rejects me I will live and die single."

Tom knew quite well that there was no need for the utterance of the second part of his resolution ; but it gave perhaps a good finish to his sentence and might serve to convince Lizzie of the strength and singleness of his attachment.

It would be difficult to describe accurately the feelings of

the three residents at the cottage on the settlement of this apparently hasty engagement. Mr. Lindsay was quite overwhelmed with the honour done to himself, though perhaps, as regarded his daughter he might have considered it no more than her deserts. The net which Rachel had been weaving in Mr. White's behalf was all shattered at once, though she could not in an instant realise so different and so far more brilliant a future for one who had become to her almost like a daughter. Yet she felt no compunction in proving faithless to the interests of the young man whose suit she had so recently been disposed to favour. She had always liked Tom from the days of his boyhood, when she was in the habit of asserting as a reason for her preference that "he didn't make any pretence at being better nor he really was."

Our hero was now bent on having it thoroughly explained to him how it could ever have come to pass that Lizzie should have pledged herself to Jacob Birch. Her excuses and explanations, confirmed as they were by her father and by Rachel, induced her lover at length entirely to forgive her, though not until he had put many searching questions and received satisfactory answers in reply.

"But how was it," he inquired, addressing himself to his host, "that Mr. Date should have so positively informed me, when I was staying with him, that your daughter was going to be married to that fellow?"

"I cannot say," said Mr. Lindsay in meek surprise. "Birch had spoken to me on the subject before that time, but Lizzie had most positively declined to listen to his suit. Probably the circumstance of your being yourself then engaged might have occasioned the blunder."

"I engaged then!" exclaimed Tom impetuously. "I was nothing of the sort. Why, what falsehoods are these that have been put about?"

"But Captain Bamford *said* you were engaged," said Lizzie in a sweet, low voice of wonder; "and we had, besides, to drink yours and Miss Emily Marchmont's health."

"Tush!" said Tom snappishly, "we all know how fond the Captain is of his jokes. That Date should have seriously asserted that Lizzie was engaged to that fellow, Birch, appears to me the most unaccountable circumstance of the two."

Evidently Lizzie's engagement, although so temporary a one, was in the eyes of our hero a far more offensive affair than his own. Indeed, as regarded the latter he seemed to consider that no excuses were necessary, and, as our heroine demanded none, it may be inferred that in married life she was likely to prove the most forbearing of the two.

Tom felt much disinclined to take his departure on the evening of that eventful day, without having a time actually fixed for the wedding. It would, he declared, be very inconvenient to him were it not to take place soon. This

assertion perplexed Mr. Lindsay and produced his usual sigh.

"I should like," the poor man pleaded, "to be present at my daughter's marriage, and I am afraid I shall not be able to return from Jamaica just immediately."

These words were uttered by our hero's host much as if he considered it a sin on his part to go in any way against the wishes of his young guest. Tom deigned, however, to enter into the difficulties of his future father-in-law, and as the marriage could not, it seemed, take place before Mr. Lindsay's departure, it was arranged that it should come off as quickly as possible after his return.

Tom did not much like the idea of having Lizzie quartered on Mrs. Webb during the time of her father's absence, for he had a sort of feeling that it would be profanation were Jacob to throw even a glance upon her now. However, as it seemed as if there were nothing else to be done he thought it advisable before he took leave to give Lizzie a caution against ever coming in "that fellow's" way, a caution which our heroine seemed just a little inclined to resent.

We need not tell our readers how gloriously happy Tom felt as he rode home that night. On entering the library, where Mr. Maxwell was in the habit of spending the evening when alone, it appeared by his old friend's countenance as if he had some unpleasant news to communicate.

“Tom,” he commenced at once in a nervous, anxious manner, “I have some news to give you—news which is, I daresay, a good deal more pleasing to the parties it immediately concerns than it is to myself.”

“What is it, sir?” inquired Tom anxiously.

“Well,” said the old man colouring, “I find I have been making a great mistake all this time. I had supposed that Miss Annesley’s affections were entirely disengaged; at least,” he added hesitatingly, and as if correcting himself; —then for a moment he stopped. “I find, though,” he at last went on, “that she and Seymour have for some time been cherishing an attachment for one another.”

“Indeed!” said Tom, with all the embarrassment of a man who did not exactly know what to say. “I am—I am very sorry to hear it.”

“Yes,” observed Mr. Maxwell, “and so am I. Had I been in the least aware of a prior attachment I should never have shown the anxiety I have done.” Here the old gentleman gave a gruff kind of cough.

Tom was feeling himself to be in a thoroughly awkward position. He was expecting every minute to receive from his benefactor a confession of his weakness for the bright-eyed, pleasant Laura, and he was thinking what comfort he could possibly find to offer when the revelation was made.

“I know,” Mr. Maxwell added, “what a sincere admiration you entertained for our amiable young friend,

and I hoped there would now have been no longer any difficulties in the way of your union. I think, indeed, you might have been successful had you not a second time been dragged into your cousin's meshes."

"Sir?" said Tom with the accent of inquiring astonishment.

"I do indeed think," Mr. Maxwell proceeded, "that a month ago the attachment on Laura's side wore nothing of a serious character, and that you might at that time have been a successful suitor."

"But, sir," said Tom, the real drift of his friend's remark at last dawning upon him, "I am quite certain that Miss Annesley never for a moment gave me a thought."

"I am glad," was the reply, "to hear that you are of that opinion. I was fearing this engagement of my young friend's might have been a disappointment to you. If it is none, I can hardly understand why you should have expressed any sorrow on the subject. Seymour is a thoroughly good fellow, and no one ought to be better aware of that fact than yourself. With a living, too, worth nearly a thousand a year I cannot consider him a bad match for any girl. Indeed, as it seems Laura is not for you, I would rather that she married Seymour than any one else."

"Then I am sure I am very happy that she should do so," said Tom, "and I hope you will like the engagement I have myself just entered into as much as you do hers."

"Your engagement!" exclaimed Mr. Maxwell with unfeigned astonishment. "What, do you mean to say that Alice Annesley has ———"

"Oh, dear no!" said Tom colouring. His sense of humility was a little shocked at the easy way in which his friend was taking it for granted that he might have been accepted by either of these two very attractive young ladies.

"It is," he went on, "a much older friend whose hand I have just sought and won. It is Lizzie Lindsay who has promised to become my wife. I did not please you in my first choice. I have, though, no doubt of your approving of my second, if you will only allow me the opportunity of introducing to you the object of it."

"Well, I only hope when we do meet that she won't thee and thou me every time I speak to her," observed Mr. Maxwell, a little churlishly, as Tom thought.

"Lizzie's father belongs to the Church of England," he replied, eagerly, "and she, of course, goes where her father does."

"Oh! I don't care for the matter of that where she goes as long as she is a good Christian," was Mr. Maxwell's rejoinder. "But you are too impetuous, Tom, and I think you should have waited a little before taking so very decided a step."

Tom felt hurt at this want of appreciation shown by his friend for a girl he had never seen, but Mr. Maxwell had

grown distrustful of our hero's judgment as regarded his matrimonial speculations ; and he had no intention at present of testifying any delight at this sudden launch of his into a fresh one.

" I so entirely depended on your liking Lizzie," the young man observed ; and he looked vexed as he spoke.

" I certainly shall not like her," was the reply, " merely on the strength of your calling her an angel. When I see the young lady it will be time enough for me to decide whether I like her or not."

" Would you object to going over with me to call some day ?" inquired Tom, with great meekness of manner.

" Most decidedly I should. It is very probable I might not admire your choice, and in that case I should feel that I had gone on a fool's errand."

Mr. Maxwell possessed what phrenologists might have denominated firmness, almost approaching to obstinacy, and our hero felt that it would be vain for him just then to attempt to alter his friend's determination. He made himself therefore comfortable with the thought that when adventitious circumstances should bring the two together, the interview was sure to result in a warm feeling of admiration on both sides.

CHAPTER XV.

A REGULAR PLOT.

ON Tuesday morning, Tom rode over to Bolton Court to pay his respects to Lord Worthington as had been arranged. He found Laura in the garden, she happening to be the only one of the party just then at home.

“Mamma is in the village,” she said, “and papa is gone somewhere with Lord Worthington and Mr. Cranmore.”

“I am sorry I shall not see Lord Worthington again,” observed Tom. “I think he leaves you this afternoon.”

“No, he does not,” was Laura’s reply. “He finds it will not be necessary for him to return to town before Thursday, and so he means to remain with us till then. But won’t you stop? Mamma is certain to be home soon, and she will, I know, be sorry not to see you.”

Tom consented to remain, and he and Laura passed the time in walking up and down the avenue. It seemed to our hero a fine opportunity for making Laura his *confidante*, and he availed himself of it. After informing her of his engagement, not without a certain amount of shame-facedness, he went on—

“The worst of it is that Mr. Maxwell seems to have taken a sort of prejudice against Lizzie, and to be unwilling to make her acquaintance. I wish I could devise some means of getting them to meet.”

“I think, perhaps,” said Laura good naturedly, “we might contrive a plan for that purpose. Let me see, is there not a beautiful church and the ruins of a fine old Abbey at Fairford?”

“There are,” said Tom, eagerly.

“Then I think we might manage to go there to-morrow. Mamma is I know planning some expedition, and we might as well go there as anywhere else. You and Mr. Maxwell could go with us. I will ask mamma about it; and here she comes,” she added, as she just then descried Mrs. Annesley’s form approaching.

There was a cordial shaking of hands between her and Tom, and the latter was pressed to remain till the gentlemen returned. The invitation so cordially given was at once accepted by our hero, and as the three walked towards the house, Laura observed, her merry eye indicating that the

intelligence she was about to give was of a happy kind.

“Sir Thomas has brought us some news, mamma. There is another marriage in prospect;” and she quickly told her mother of Tom’s fresh engagement, Mr. Maxwell’s resolution, and her proposed method of overcoming it.

Mrs. Annesley took to the proposal at once. She had, she said, been wanting to do something for the entertainment of her guests, and an expedition to Fairford would be just the thing of all others that she would like.

Mr. Annesley on his return entered heartily into the project.

“We must ask Maxwell to help us to get there,” he observed. “We shall be too large a party for our own carriage. Seymour must come, if it is only for Laura’s gratification,” and the father looked kindly at his daughter as he spoke. “Your friend will, I am sure, have no objection to bringing him in his carriage, or to allowing Laura and perhaps one more of us to have a seat in it afterwards. We are you know on the road from Maplewood to Fairford. It is though a long journey, especially for you, and I think I had better write to Middleton for a relay of horses. That will of course entirely be my affair.”

And I think, Laura,” said her mother, “that you should write to Mr. Maxwell and ask him to forgive us for making these arrangements without consulting him.”

This was a task which Laura most willingly entered upon, and though we have not seen the letter, we feel sure it contained words which were very flattering to the old man. He made an effort at looking very cross while reading it, but one of his pleasantest smiles brightened up his face as, on looking up from its perusal, he observed to our hero,

“This is a regular plot, Tom, between yourself and my lively friend. It is much too far to go for a picnic,” he went on, determined on having a cavil at the arrangement, “but you young people have never any thought for us elder ones.”

Both Laura and Tom were a little out of the old gentleman’s good books for having so entirely failed in carrying out his own particular views.

“Lord Worthington seemed to like the plan very much when it was proposed to him,” observed Tom, very humbly.

“Well,” was the reply, “you seem to have pretty well settled it among yourselves without ever consulting me. Of course I don’t go if it rains.”

“No, Sir,” said Tom, “the party would in that case be put off till the next day.”

“Well, remember, I do not call on these friends of yours. I think you said they lived in the village.”

“Nearly a mile away,” said Tom. “You would have no objection to my calling there and bringing Lizzie and Mr. Lindsay to join our party.”

"Oh, you might do that," said Mr. Maxwell, with assumed indifference, though he had lurking within a decided curiosity to see this new love of Tom's.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PICNIC PARTY.

THE morning was so brilliant that Mr. Maxwell could not possibly have found an excuse for not making one of the party, even if he had wished to do so. However, as it happened, he was almost as eager for the expedition as our hero himself. Mr. Martin had been dining at Maplewood on the previous evening, and Mr. Maxwell had been talking to him about Fairford. The subject having been introduced, Mr. Martin had mentioned that some remarkable coins had been found quite recently in the neighbourhood.

“I fancy,” he added, “there may be a good many still remaining, and I think of going over some day with my pickaxe to see what I can find.”

Mr. Maxwell was, as we know, himself something of an

antiquary, and now he dwelt with pleasure on the thought of being beforehand with his friend. He stepped therefore into his carriage well armed with implements fitted for the carrying out of his purpose, and on his arrival at Maplewood, he was in as good a mood as any among the merry party.

Fairford was a large, straggling village, with the church lying at the further end of it. As you approached it from Maplewood, you had to pass one of the roads leading to the abbey, which lay to the left, and about a mile from the village. The coins had been found not very far from the ruins, and as it was for this spot that Mr. Maxwell was bound, he was the first to alight. The rest of the party drove on to the church, and on reaching it our hero at once started off in search of Lizzie, not without certain misgivings as to his success in at once finding her. The post had left Maplewood before his return on the previous day, and he had in consequence been unable to announce to her that he was coming.

It had been arranged that the whole party was to meet at the abbey at three o'clock, and old Morgan had been charged to spread the sylvan repast somewhere within the walls of the ruin. However, on arriving there, the old man who was in the habit of showing the place to strangers recommended him to a spot a little way off, where was a beautiful glade, with a clear stream running through it. It was considered, he said, so appropriate a place for a

picnic, that gentlefolks always chose it in preference to the abbey. He undertook to tell the party when they arrived that this advice had been given and adopted, and Morgan and Rogers between them soon had everything satisfactorily arranged.

It was not long before our hero found himself at the cottage door, which was at once opened to him by Rachel, she having from an upper window marked his approach.

“La, Sir,” was her immediate exclamation, “they will be so vexed! Neither master nor Miss Lizzie are at home. Master had a letter from a friend just come from the West Indies, and he’s gone off to London in consequence. Miss Lizzie is gone out collecting for Mrs. Webb, and I can’t in the least say when she’ll be back.”

“But can you tell me where I may find her?” said Tom with breathless eagerness.

“I can’t in the least,” was the discomforting reply.

“What was to be done?” The idea of leaving Fairford without bringing about a meeting between his friend and his bride-elect was one so mortifying that our hero could not think of it with patience. On this occasion, though, even Rachel failed of rendering any help, and indeed it seemed as if there were none to be given.

“Do you think it possible she may return soon?” Tom inquired, as if imploring for a favourable response.

“Well, she might, and she might not. If she don’t

come back within the next hour, I shall make sure as she's dining at Mrs. Webb's, or at Miss Baxter's, or may-be at Mrs. Day's."

"And do these people live near one another?" the young man inquired eagerly.

"Oh, la ! bless thee, no. Miss Baxter do live a good three miles from the Rectory."

More and more hopeless, did things appear. However, there was that one hope—a faint one in Rachel's estimation, that Lizzie might return soon.

An hour had elapsed, almost two hours, and still no Lizzie. Tom had been taking a look round in all directions, and was sauntering back to the house. Rachel was in the garden, and as our hero approached she came towards him.

"I'm quite confident now," she said, "as Miss Lizzie won't be back afore six, if she's here even then."

The young man had waited and waited until he had thrown himself into a fever of anxiety, and now Rachel's words decided him on trying his patience no longer. He might, he still hoped, chance to fall in with the fair wanderer on the way to the ruins ; however, no glimpse of Lizzie could he descry, and he was feeling somewhat crest-fallen as he approached the place of general rendezvous.

On arriving at the abbey, the old man accosted him, and directed him where to proceed.

"What, are you come back all alone?" exclaimed Mr.

Annesley as soon as Tom made his appearance among the party, who had during the last half-hour been in a state of impatient eagerness to see the bride-elect.

Our hero had maintained a mysterious silence as regarded her beauty, but great things were nevertheless expected of her in this respect. A general dulness came over the company assembled when the young Baronet informed them that she was not to be found, and the gentlemen at once began to feel very hungry.

“Where is Maxwell?” Lord Worthington inquired, as he pulled out his large gold watch.

“Why there he is!” shouted Mr. Annesley, “and it seems as if he had had better luck than Sir Thomas, for I see a fair lady hanging on his arm.”

“By Jove! it is Lizzie herself,” exclaimed Tom, and he rushed forward to claim the fair delinquent.

A shout of applause was struck up by the three elder gentlemen, while Mr. Maxwell boldly marched on, with our heroine’s arm still forcibly retained in his.

Lizzie’s countenance was strongly expressive of the startling surprise which this sudden introduction among a crowd of strangers had occasioned her.

Her first thought had been to slip her arm from under that of her companion and to make a rapid retreat, but it was held with too firm a grasp; and now Tom had come

forward, and at sight of him her intention and wish to escape had vanished at once.

But we must explain a little how it was that Lizzie and the perversely-disposed widower had become so unexpectedly coupled together. The latter, as our readers already know, had been intent on finding some old coins, and he had in pursuit of that object hammered away with considerable success. This success had stimulated him to greater efforts, until on looking at his watch and finding he had been occupied in his search longer than he had intended, he decided on bending his steps at once towards the Abbey. This was easier thought than done. Its situation was low, and it was not to be seen until you approached it near, and the old man had been groping about until he had not the least idea in which direction the Abbey lay. In the midst of his dilemma he had discerned among the trees a neat little cottage, to which he had at once directed his steps.

A plainly dressed young lady, singularly attractive-looking as Mr. Maxwell thought, was just leaving the cottage as he approached it. Making her a low bow, he had asked her if she could tell him the shortest way to the Abbey. He was, he said, expecting to meet some friends there, and he was pressed for time. If she could direct him he would feel much obliged.

“I shall have much pleasure in coming with you,” said

Lizzie. "There is a short way, but I think you would have some difficulty in finding it alone."

Mr. Maxwell made all necessary protestations against taking the fair stranger out of her way, but she assured him it would not lengthen her walk much. Having at length accepted her escort, the old gentleman got into conversation with her on matters concerning the neighbourhood—matters in which Lizzie was herself well versed, for her father was of an inquiring mind as regarded all local information, and she had been generally his companion in his walks.

Mr. Maxwell was quickly charmed with his companion both on account of her intelligence and for her good looks, and he was debating whether he might consider himself authorised to invite this new acquaintance to rest and partake of some refreshment at Mr. Annesley's cost. While debating the point the two arrived at a very steep ascent, and the old man at once offered Lizzie his arm. The latter, who was quick in her likes and in her dislikes, was already favourably impressed with her new acquaintance, he having betrayed none of his reputed churlishness to her, and as she had been much accustomed to her father's support, she now unhesitatingly accepted that which the old gentleman, though a stranger, was so ready to give. Mr. Maxwell found himself in so agreeable a position with this fair creature's arm entwined in his, that he showed an unwillingness to relinquish it, and Lizzie had

been wondering whether it would be quite polite on her part to disengage her arm from his tenacious hold of it, when the party had suddenly opened on her view, occasioning her that inclination which she had betrayed to rush away.

Mr. Maxwell's self-congratulation at having been the one to present our heroine to her lover was something quite amusing, and perhaps it contributed to his future rapturous approval of this second choice of our hero's. Triumphant he led her to the turfy table, and with such warm admirers on either side of her as were personified by the widower and by Tom, our heroine was well off for friends. Mr. Maxwell might however have felt a little scrupulous about forsaking Laura, were it not that she appeared so fully occupied with Mr. Seymour, while Alice seemed to have found a devoted friend in the younger Mr. Cranmore. Her attentions to Tom three or four evenings previously had had, apparently, the effect of bringing her out, and of giving a promise that she might probably in time become as agreeable as Laura herself, though hitherto the sound of her voice beyond her own family circle had seldom been heard.

Our hero's disappointment and Mr. Maxwell's antiquarian researches combined had a little retarded the repast, so that there was short time allowed for lingering among the ruins when it was over. Tom undertook to go and order the carriages, and he availed himself of the opportunity for

escorting Lizzie home. Most cordial was the leave taking between her and the widower, and as soon as the former had disappeared with her lover, the old man came up to Laura and tendered her the most profuse compliments on her clever way of managing matters.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FEARFUL TRAGEDY.

THE firm of Dod had from generation to generation had the management of the Granby estates. The present man was growing old, and as he had neither son nor nephew, he had agreed to take Jacob into partnership when he had served his time as an articled clerk. Since then the young lawyer had shown so much industry, perseverance and astuteness, that he had won the unlimited confidence of the old man ; the latter had indeed given over the management of affairs very much to his coadjutor, and had only made one stipulation. It was that a clerk of the name of Timmins, who had worked in the office for well-nigh forty years, should remain there with increased salary and additional responsibilities.

Jacob was well satisfied with this arrangement. Mr. Timmins's whole faculties during those forty years had been given to his work, so that his desk and papers had become as it were a part and parcel of himself. He had, in consequence, a clearer insight into business matters connected with the firm than was possessed by the younger lawyer; and those landed proprietors, to whom Dod and Birch acted in the capacity of agents, would sometimes affirm that the old clerk knew more about their estates than they did themselves.

At first it had been a great blow to Mr. Timmins when the young Baronet decided on taking his affairs out of the hands of the old firm, for he dreaded lest their entangled condition should be imputed in any way to legal mismanagement. However, when Jacob assured him that Tom was a low, manœuvring sort of fellow, who sought for purposes of his own, in every way to flatter the prejudices of the wealthy Mr. Maxwell, the clerk ceased to vex himself about the matter; and after taking a most creditable amount of pains to make everything clear to Mr. Jenkins, he showed no regret at having to surrender to that lawyer all documents and papers bearing reference to the estate, merely expressing a wish in doing so, that if the property were eventually to be sold, it might fall into good hands.

Whitsuntide was coming round, and it was always a time of much merry-making in the town of Barking. It had been

an immemorial custom that the office servants should make Whit-Monday a day of pleasure, and Jacob had expressed his intention of allowing them one and all on this occasion to have their full liberty. No work was to be done in the office, and from morning till night they were to amuse themselves as best they might.

Whit-Monday was beside a favourite club-day among the poorer classes in Huntingdonshire, and Mr. Maxwell was always in the habit of meeting his smaller tenants and work-people in the parish church, and afterwards presiding at a dinner prepared for the occasion, at the one Inn of which the village of Maplewood could in those days boast. It was his custom therefore on that day to leave home at an early hour.

Late in the evening of Whit-Sunday Jacob sent a note to one of the junior clerks, saying he wished him particularly to go to Maplewood the following morning on business that required immediate attention. He was sorry, he added, to interfere with Mr. Chad's holiday, though he thought that a ride to Maplewood and back, would not be altogether an unpleasant way of spending a part of it. The clerk was to get a horse from Hardman's, and he, Jacob, would expect him to call at about ten o'clock for the note he wished to send by him.

On receiving this note, Mr. Chads walked down the street and knocked at Mr. Timmins's door.

“I am sorry,” he said on entering, “that I shall have to

give up accompanying you to Downy Hill to-morrow. I have just had a note from Mr. Birch, ordering me to go to Maplewood in the morning."

"And what are you going to Maplewood for?" inquired Mr. Timmins in a tone of surprise.

"I don't know," was the reply, "but it seems the business is particular."

"I ought to know the Baronet's affairs pretty well," observed Mr. Timmins. "I cannot conceive what fresh piece of business this can be."

"I know nothing more than what I have already told you," observed Mr. Chads. "I have Mr. Birch's orders, contained in this note, to the effect that I am to be at his house at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

Mr. Timmins read the note very carefully, but it evidently did not help him out of his perplexity.

Now John Chads was paying his addresses to Martha, Mr. Timmins's eldest daughter, and so it was likely to be a great disappointment to each of these two young people, should the junior clerk be prevented from making one of the party to Downy Hill. On taking this into consideration, Mr. Timmins decided on offering himself as the bearer of the note, feeling assured that Mr. Birch could have no objection to this arrangement. Punctually at ten the head clerk knocked at the door of Jacobs's mansion, and was at once ushered into his master's presence. There was a

certain expression of annoyance on Jacob's countenance as Mr. Timmins appeared—an expression though which an unsuspecting man would never have noticed. His annoyance did not betray itself in words.

"I thought," he merely observed, "that you were going with the party of excursionists to Downy Hill."

"I did intend it, sir," was the reply, "but my wife had a fancy for having Chads of the party, and I did not wish to disappoint either him or her."

"Oh ! that was how it was," said Jacob, looking better satisfied. "I fancied that as Chads's family live so near Maplewood, he might have liked afterwards to have gone and spent the day with them."

All this seemed very natural to Mr. Timmins who received very deferentially his master's directions.

"Should Sir Thomas be out for the day," were the lawyer's last orders, "you can bring the note book, but I have just found that it is of importance that I should have an interview with him before the post goes out."

As the clerk journeyed towards Maplewood, he thought and thought what could this important business be, and the more he thought the more perplexed he became.

The Baronet was at home, and the note was at once carried in to him. We will give the contents of it for the benefit of our readers:—

Mr. Birch will feel much obliged if Sir Thomas will kindly pay him a visit at his office at three o'clock, or as soon afterwards as he can conveniently come. There is some business of importance about to be transacted in which Lady Marchmont and her daughters are particularly concerned, and the papers relating to it will require Sir Thomas's signature before being sent to town. Any delay might be attended with great inconvenience. Mr. Birch regrets that a lapse of memory should have been the cause of his giving Sir Thomas such very short notice on the subject.

The Close, May 12th.

Tom at once wrote in reply saying that he would be at the office at the hour named. Mr. Timmins brought back the Baronet's answer, inquired whether his master had any fresh orders, and receiving a reply in the negative, the clerk retired to the solitude of his own house.

For forty years had Job Timmins applied himself assiduously to office work, and the very few holidays allowed him by his employers were saved from being wearisome, simply by being spent with his family in some country place, where the fresh air, the green fields, and above all, the gambols of his children (Job had married late in life) afforded something of a pleasing variety to the monotony of his daily avocations. His deserted house gave a sense of dreariness to Job, which he could not get over, and after having diligently picked all the snails and slugs off the few gooseberry trees which vegetated in the small, square piece

of ground which lay behind his dwelling, he found himself at a loss for further occupation.

It was an old, rambling place—the lawyers' office ; and the room occupied by Jacob lay at the back, its one window looking out into a dingy old court, with a high wall in front of it. There was an empty house on one side of it, while the stairs were on the other, and beyond them the rooms allotted to the junior clerks. In front was the general reception room, which clients were never known to enter on so universal a holiday as was Whit-Monday in the town of Barking.

Sir Thomas was punctual to his hour, and he had hardly reached the office door, when it was opened by Jacob himself.

“ I am very much obliged to you for this visit,” he said—“ Will you have the kindness to follow me ? ” While uttering these courteous words, the passion of hatred in Jacob's bosom was fast kindling into a blaze.

Tom did as he was bid, and after showing him into his own apartment, the lawyer requested him to sit down. He then placed a document on the table in front of where the Baronet was sitting, stood behind his visitor's chair, and commenced a preamble about some leasehold. The lawyer's words were altogether unintelligible to Tom ; he had though an idea that he ought to know something about what he had to sign, and so he was engrossed in making the document and Birch's explanation of it clear to his understanding, if such were possible.

Suddenly there was a report of a pistol. Its contents were intended for our hero's head, but instead of that they merely grazed his shoulder. Jacob had not yet become a practised assassin, and his nerves had failed him just as he was taking aim. Tom had, at the moment his enemy was firing, raised his hand to his head for the purpose of driving away an insect which had been troubling him. The action had given Jacob an alarm, causing him to lose his presence of mind, and so we may say that under Providence this insect was, to all appearances, the saving of Tom's life.

With the rapidity of lightning our hero seized on a heavy lamp that stood on the table, and with tremendous force he levelled a blow at the would-be assassin's head. Jacob had got his second pistol ready, and was preparing himself again to take aim, when the door opened and Mr. Timmins appeared.

Tom's blow had followed the pistol shot so instantaneously that it had allowed the clerk but little time for descending the stairs (his own room was above Jacob's); indeed, it seemed marvellous how, with his ordinary habit of deliberation, he could have adopted such an impromptu proceeding now.

Jacob's arm fell, and then his whole body. The blow he had received and his terror at this most unexpected apparition had together prostrated all his powers. The old clerk had, as we have said, ended his garden occupation,

and having nothing wherewith to amuse himself in the house, he had decided on returning to his high office stool, and on getting forward some of the business cut out for him on the following day.

A new light seemed suddenly to have shot across Mr. Timmins's mind. He was a man of observation, and he had been much struck with the Baronet's fine, open countenance, and with his frank and courteous manner, as in his own person he presented to the clerk the few lines he had just been writing. It set him wondering, as he returned, whether Sir Thomas were the mean, manœuvring fellow which the lawyer had represented him as being ; whether rather it might not have been some private grudge, or some previous misconduct on the part of Jacob himself, that had caused this youthful inheritor of the Granby estates to take so decided a step. What had been his master's intentions Mr. Timmins could not now for a moment doubt.

“Have you been much hurt, Sir ?” was his first question.

“Oh no,” said Tom, “but I may, I believe, be thankful that I am not a dead man. You had better see to Birch, for I expect he is a good deal the most hurt of the two.” After his wonderfully rapid descent of the stairs, the clerk's powers of action seemed for the moment paralyzed, and in the meantime Jacob had gone off into a swoon.

Our hero hurried off to the street door, to see if he could despatch a messenger for help, while Mr. Timmins quietly

followed behind, apparently fearful of being left alone with the wounded man. Just at this moment, a groom happened to pass, riding apparently his master's horse.

"Do you know where to find a surgeon?" Tom eagerly inquired.

"Yes, Sir," was the reply. "I am myself servant to Mr. Grahame, the first surgeon in the town."

"Then go home as quickly as possible, and tell your master he is wanted here immediately. If Mr. Grahame is not at home, go at once for some one else," and our hero put a five shilling piece into the man's hand. Then, followed by Timmins, he was in the act of returning to the room where Jacob lay, when a second pistol report was heard.

Binch had, as we have said, been lying in an apparently fainting state, but he had nevertheless been aware of the departure of his intended victim and of the clerk besides. As his senses got quickened, he thought of himself as a ruined man, while the vision of a gallows rose to his mind's eye in gigantic and terrifying proportions. He felt there was but one means of escaping from the gloomy prospect, and it was one of which he was resolved on availing himself. This time he had used his pistol to better effect, and had discharged the whole of its contents into his own brain.

There was soon a multitude assembled round the office; indeed one was inclined to wonder on this holiday from

whence all the people came. Within lay the dying man—a ghastly and an awful spectacle. That solemn and respectful silence which on ordinary occasions reigns around the place which the departing spirit is still occupying—such a silence Jacob's last moments were not honoured by. Curiosity prompted many to enter who had better have been away, and numerous were the expressions of astonishment and horror at the strange tragedy that had so recently been enacted.

“He must have been mad!” exclaimed Mr. Humphrey, a member of the City Bench, after Mr. Grahame had pronounced the sinner's mortal career to be ended. “No man in his senses,” he continued, “could have perpetrated such a deed as that.”

“Mr. Birch was I suppose as mad as most men are who indulge unchecked their evil passions,” observed Mr. Topham, a rising solicitor of the town, who might it was supposed, have become a formidable rival even to Birch himself. “He hated Sir Thomas—why, I hardly know. Perhaps he was jealous of the superior position in which fortune had placed one whom he had I believe once chosen to consider in every way inferior to himself.”

“Well,” said Tom with emotion, “he cannot say anything now in his own defence. We will leave him to settle his account with his Maker, and hope that an all-seeing eye will find an excuse to palliate the acts which we mortals cannot discover.”

"And are you, sir," inquired Mr. Topham, one "among those whose pity is so entirely given to the criminal, that they have apparently none left for the honest man who suffers through his misdeeds?"

"By no means, sir," said Tom. "Every injury that a man inflicts on another I would visit with a fitting punishment. I agree with you in thinking that our sympathy with the villain is often little short of cruelty to those whom he may think fit to mark out as his victims. Still, while in defence of the weak and the innocent we should in justice punish the guilty, we ought, I believe, at the same time to feel that with better education and better example, they might eventually have turned out better men."

"True, true," said Mr. Grahame, "and the pity is that we have not yet learnt really to educate our children on the highest principles—to bring religion into daily practices, instead of making it merely a worldly and wearisome form to be got through on Sundays."

Mr. Grahame has not yet succeeded in making education what the truly religious, the noble, and the generous-minded would have it. He did, however, succeed and that very quickly, in putting Tom's injured shoulder all right, and his introduction at Maplewood on this occasion, was the cause of his becoming ever afterwards the family physician at Granby Hall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

“So you are going to get yourself tied at last,” said Mr. Follett to his cousin, Lord Scamperwell, as he met him one day shortly after his engagement walking down Bond Street.

“Well, it’s a thing a man must do once in his life,” was the reply, “and I doubt if I could ever have found a prettier girl than Emily Marchmont to whom to give my hand.”

“And do you really mean to renounce your freedom, and to set us all an example of a pattern husband? You’ll find it rather a change after the entire liberty you have enjoyed hitherto.”

“That is what I mean to enjoy still,” said his Lordship,

loftily. "I am not the man to go into bondage to any woman."

"Not I suppose when she is your wife," observed Mr. Follett somewhat ironically. He remembered a passage in his cousin's life, wherein he was fooled to the uttermost through his bondage to the wife of another man.

This remark was evidently not acceptable to his Lordship, so Mr. Follett did his best at mending it with another. "I want," he said, "to see this fair Emily whose beauty has become such a household word."

"That is easily to be done," replied the peer with a look of gratified vanity. He was never tired of having it put before him that he had carried off the beauty of the season. "I have," he continued, "made an appointment to ride with Emily at twelve o'clock, and it only wants half-an-hour of that time."

Mr. Follett considered it worth his while to stroll leisurely in the direction of the park. Among the crowd assembled there he recognized an old acquaintance.

"I am come to have a sight of this wonderful beauty whom the London world is so raving about," he observed as he accosted Mr. Montgomery.

"Well then, you may in a minute or two have your wish gratified," said the latter. "Here she comes!"

"And a beautiful creature she is too, upon my soul," observed Mr. Follett. "How she sits and manages her

horse!"—and his Lordship's cousin gazed at his Lordship's betrothed with all the interest he was capable of feeling in anything that did not immediately concern himself.

As the graceful form vanished into distance, "I wonder," he said, "if she will look anything like as happy ten years hence as she does now!"

"Probably not," was the reply; "so she is wise perhaps in making the most of her fool's paradise while it lasts. Ten years hence she will probably find, if report speaks true, that she would have done far better in keeping to the old love. But then if Miss Emily Marchmont's understanding were as fine as her face and form, she would be something too perfect for any of us mortals to aspire to."

Lord Scamperwell's marriage with Emily was truly a magnificent affair, filling up many columns of the newspaper on the following day, and causing money to be scarce in her Ladyship's household for some months afterwards. The noble peer wished his friends to imagine that the conquest he had won was quite a matter of course, and a subject for no particular elation on his part; and if indifference is a proof of an easy conquest, then that which his Lordship had achieved had not given him much trouble.

The fact was that Emily did not possess enough of a certain kind of cleverness to enable her to keep up the flame of her noble admirer's fancy. He had lived upon flattery for a good many years—flattery of that pernicious kind

which an artful woman knows how to administer for the purpose of keeping a wealthy lover in bondage to her. Emily understood far better the art of receiving than of administering flattery gracefully; and though his Lordship had not yet lost his admiration for her singular personal attractions, yet he found them not altogether satisfying. Her smile, lovely as it was, had a little palled upon him, for he had found that so many shared it with himself. He went through the ceremony with the most perfect non-chalance. Emily, on the contrary, did betray a little emotion. She had found out that the man to whom she was about to bind herself by the solemn vow of marriage, was of a nature incapable of really loving anything but himself. There was undoubtedly a strong similarity between the two in this respect, though Emily was not one bit more ready on this account to make excuses for his Lordship. Indeed, she had on one occasion communicated to Georgie her wish that the Peer and the Baronet could only change places, for then in that case she should feel that her lot was altogether as blessed a one as her various merits deserved.

It was a grand marriage, as we have said, and a sultry sun in July shone with unclouded lustre; on the twelve fair bridesmaids, and the lovely bride. No early tears had tarnished the beauty of the latter and, magnificently attired as she was, she looked as she gracefully walked on towards the altar, leaning on Mr. Gaystone's arm, very much like

what by a certain phase of modern thought, would have been styled a full dressed angel. Champagne at the breakfast flowed like water, healths were drank rapturously, speeches were made, and the company were as much bored as people generally are on these occasions. There was of course a proper display of affection between the mother and the daughter at the parting, though the former would have demurred about taking back this favourite child, even though she had known for a certainty that a long scene of splendid misery was awaiting her.

The bridal equipage was all perfect, and the happy (?) pair drove off to pass the honeymoon at Baden.

“And when am I to carry off Georgie?” said Harry Harewood to Lady Marchmont, as the carriage with its four milk white horses drove away.

“When you can get your cousin to declare you to be his heir,” replied her Ladyship, laughing.

“If I am to wait till then, I think I had better give her up at once,” observed Harry, “for you may be quite sure none of the old gentleman’s riches are for me.”

Lady Marchmont was not quite so sure, and therefore she would have had Harry wait at all events until some better offer should turn up, though there was no immediate prospect of anything of the sort. Harry was however beginning to feel as rebelliously disposed towards his mother that was to be, as he had hitherto shown himself towards her whom

nature had given him as such. Taking therefore a fancy to the prettiest and pleasantest looking of Emily's bridesmaids, one of a family of seven portionless girls, he commenced paying her very desperate attentions at the Ball which followed the wedding. These attentions were pleasantly received. Mrs. Egerton was not of an ambitious turn of mind, and she had a notion of leaving money and all other matters in the hands of Providence, and so, a month after Lord Scamperwell had possessed himself of Emily Marchmont, the elder sister's former lover was driving away merrily from church with his good humoured bride.

We must now return to the real hero and heroine of this tale. It had at once been agreed upon between the two that Lizzie's four thousand pounds was altogether to be made over to her father. Mr. Lindsay had at first positively refused to give his consent to this arrangement. When, however, Lizzie earnestly represented to him how wretched she should feel if, while enjoying every comfort herself, she should have to think that her father was in any way suffering from want, he had assented to the proposal with certain limitations. His interview with his West Indian friend had been on the whole a satisfactory one. The land was still the same as it had been, only it was not likely at present to put any money into the proprietor's pocket. Mr.

Lindsay hoped, though, ere long, to live with comfort on his own resources.

Lizzie had left so favourable an impression on Mr. Maxwell's mind that the day after Tom's adventure he went over himself to Fairford for the purpose of announcing it to her. He had intended killing two birds with one stone, as the saying is ; however he was, as it turned out, so much taken up with this new favourite of his, that the coins were altogether forgotten. Indeed, he seemed nearly as anxious to render Lizzie happy as was Tom himself ; and when she expressed the wish that her father could get rid of his West Indian property and be saved the trouble of going out there, he proposed making a purchase of it, relying as he did on the power he might have of selling it again. This offer was accepted with much gratitude, though with considerable hesitation. Mr. Lindsay had never been one of those who unscrupulously take advantage of the good nature of others.

Three marriages took place in that sunny summer month. Lord Scamperwell's we have already alluded to, and both Lizzie's and Laura's followed close upon it, indeed so close that Mr. Maxwell had to go straight from the one to the other. At each he displayed an equal amount of hilarity ; and when questioned afterwards by Mrs. Maggs as to the comparative merits of the two brides, he positively declined giving any opinion on the subject.

Mr. White had appeared at the Fairford ceremony, his countenance radiant with joy. Mr. Hunt, the clergyman at Granby, had recently died, and the living was in Sir Thomas's gift. He had at once consulted Lizzie as to whom he should present it, and she had unhesitatingly pronounced in favour of Mr. White. The curate would, however, have to wait for more than a year and a half before he could qualify himself to enter upon his duties as a rector. It was therefore arranged that some one should be found to hold the living in the meanwhile. Mr. White's impressionable heart had just been smitten by another fair face, and while assisting at Lizzie's marriage he was hoping that his own would speedily follow. A visit to Mr. Fanshaw at Aubrey had given him an opportunity of making Lucy Smith's acquaintance. Her good humoured, pleasant face, and cheerful, lively laugh were agreeable to William, and on further intimacy he was glad to find that the young lady's affections were still disengaged, and that she was quite ready to bestow them upon him.

The one drop of bitterness in Lizzie's cup on that auspicious day was the thought of leaving her father. However, Rachel promised that she would see as master didn't mope, and though the poor man entirely broke down at the last parting embrace, yet there was a good deal more of joy than of sorrow at his heart.



Thirty years have now elapsed since Tom and Lizzie became one. Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Lindsay have long ago been borne to their last resting-places. There was not a dry eye amongst the poor of Maplewood when the good old squire was laid with his fathers, and it was with feelings of the deepest emotion that the son of his adoption and his own naturally wild and impulsive relative followed him to the grave.

Harry had in former years shown such a disregard to the feelings of his old relative as well as such a disposition to be guided by those who were altogether distasteful to the widower, that the latter had at one time quite resolved on making Tom his heir. However, when our hero on succeeding to the Granby estates and title had so rashly engaged himself to his cousin, Mr. Maxwell began to waver in his determination, though still he entertained no thought of leaving any of his property to Harry.

Fortunately for the latter he and his bride chanced to meet the old man shortly after their marriage at the house of their mutual friend, Mr. Martin, and the widower was at once prepossessed in favour of the bride. He foretold the reformation which Ellen was likely to make in his careless, thoughtless cousin; a reformation which soon took place in fact. Harry was enabled through Ellen's eyes at length to discover that his old cousin was "a thorough good fellow,"

and one to be both esteemed and liked. He was not long in giving Mr. Maxwell the benefit of his newly adopted opinion, by his assiduously respectful behaviour, and there soon grew up a warm feeling of affection between the old and the young man. Harry succeeded to the estate which the widower's care had considerably improved. A good deal of Mr. Maxwell's personal property went to Tom.

The Baronet has recently retired from public life, and it is probable that for the rest of his days he will reside on his estate which now brings him in an almost princely revenue. The Granby hounds are a thing of the past, and many among the neighbouring gentry have in consequence decided that since the time of the late Sir Charles the good old Marchmont stock has degenerated. None of these croakers have, however, ventured on letting the present Baronet know how lightly he is esteemed among them, for they have an instinctive feeling that Sir Thomas is not the man to be bullied.

The possessor of mere personal courage may be in mind a slave ; he may cower before the opinion of the world, even when represented by the baser portion of it. Sir Thomas's courage is of a far loftier kind than this. It renders him independent both in feeling and in action, and it puts him above that kind of tyranny which, in hunting neighbourhoods, is too often practised on some unfortunate individual, who has presumed to show a want of allegiance to the arbitrary laws of sport.

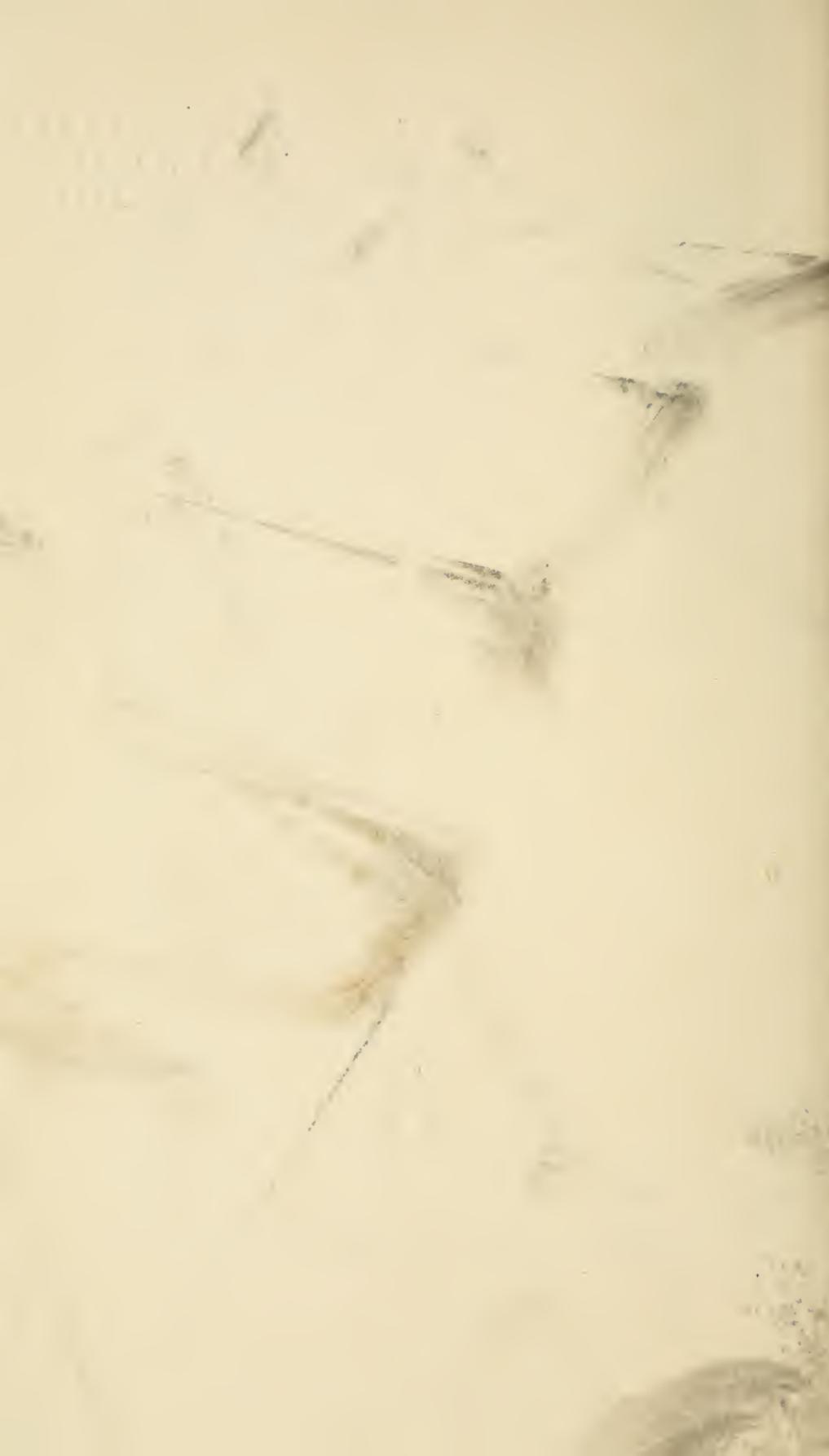
The Youngfellows and Mr. Chase solace themselves with the hope that when Charles, the Baronet's only son, succeeds to the title and estates, he will perform the duties of his position and title better than his father has performed his. We think their hopes are doomed to disappointment. The future inheritor is at present in the army and he has recently returned from India. While there he a good deal distinguished himself in the warfare which he waged against the wild and dangerous animals of the tropics, but he has shown no inclination since his return to join with others in the sport of hunting down creatures so defenceless that their one small hope of safety lies in flight.

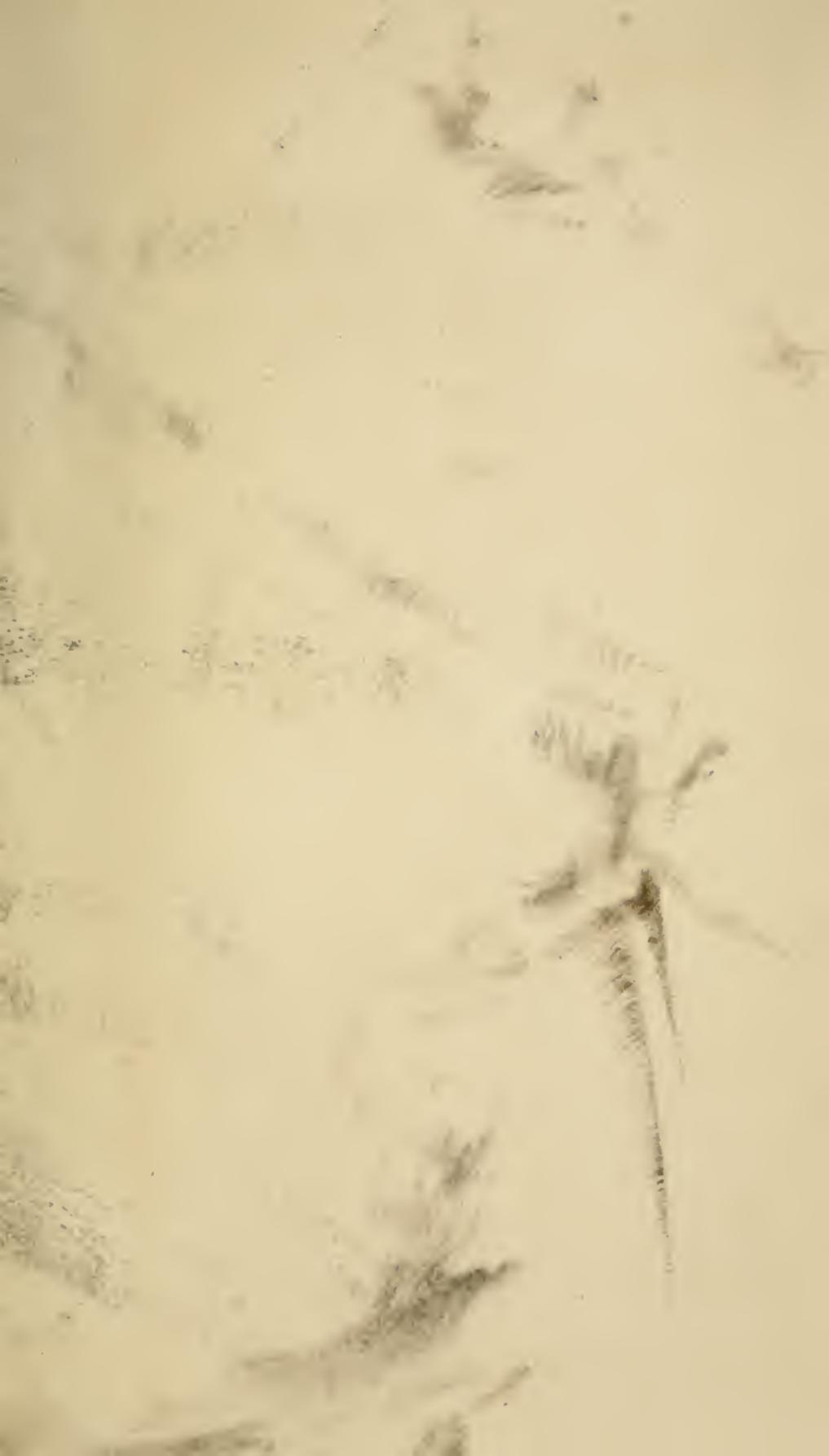
Sir Thomas and Lady Marchmont have two daughters both satisfactorily married, and the arrival of a fifth grandchild is already making grandpapa and grandmama feel old.

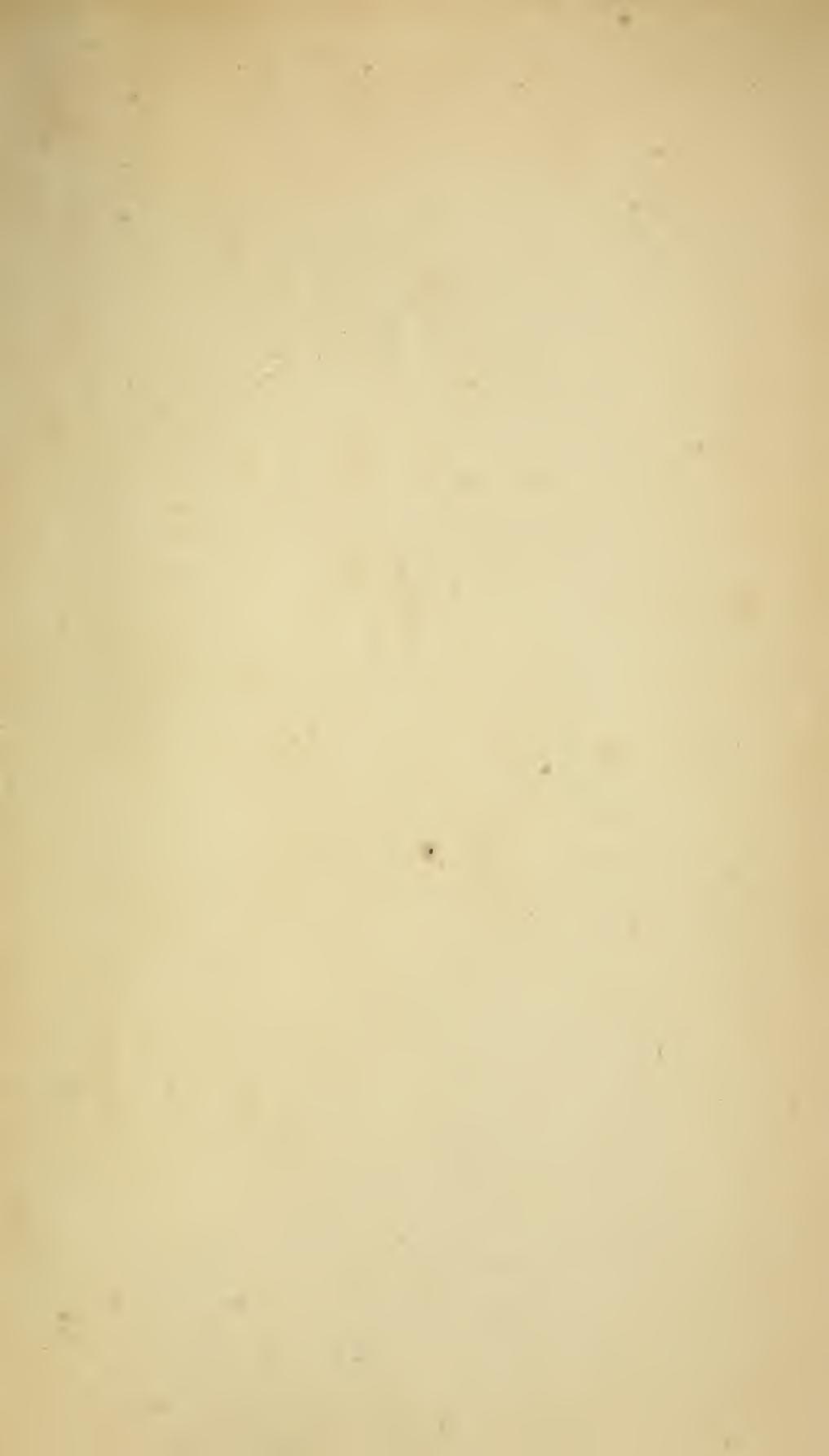
The gossips are wondering why Charles, at the age of twenty-nine should never yet have taken a wife. Some aver that his devotion to his mother incapacitates him for loving any other woman as well. Lady Marchmont herself thinks differently. She has already perceived an inclination on his part for Ellen, the seventh of Harry Harewood's eleven children, and as she fancies the young lady is already attached to Charles, she hopes it will not be long before a proposal is made. We can venture to say that both Harry and his wife will welcome such a son-in-law with unfeigned

delight, and we can only wish for Charles and Nelly as happy a married career as has hitherto fallen to the lot of their parents.

[FINIS.]









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